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# THE STRANGE CASE OF THE 1897 AIRSHIP

By Jerome Clark



To publish this vitally important article in more than one section would so destroy its impact that, despite its length, it has been decided to present it in its entirety. Accordingly our popular contributor's article The Greatest Flap Yet?—Pt. IV. has been held over for a later issue of the REVIEW.

It began in November 1896 in Northern California. All that month and into December, Western newspapers, publishing a confused conglomeration of truths, half-truths and outright falsehoods, gave sensational treatment to the appearances of—what, no one really knew, though just about everyone had an opinion. Those who had not seen it considered it proof that a great many of their fellow citizens were quite mad. Those who had seen it, understandably feeling that they were better qualified to judge their own sanity, called it “the airship”. The “airship”, they maintained, was a piloted craft of some kind, carrying brilliant searchlights and human-like passengers, capable of flying against the wind, landing and taking off when approached.



After December, there were no more reports. With no UFO enthusiasts to keep interest alive, the public quickly dismissed the stories from consciousness and went on to what it fancied more pressing concerns—temporarily.

For in March 1897 the airship—or airships—reappeared, this time all over the Midwestern and Western United States, in large numbers and in the presences of thousands of witnesses. By the time the phenomenon had left—in May—one of the most revealing, and neglected, chapters of the UFO saga had concluded.

What I wish to emphasize in the article that follows is not so much the *fact* of the airship as its meaning in relation to the whole UFO problem. Although the reports I and several others have uncovered to date constitute only a fairly small proportion of all the published incidents of 1897 (it is hoped that a more definitive, greatly expanded work can be published in the future), it is evident that continued probing into the mystery serves only to confirm the existence of a highly important pattern, the significance of which we turn to after we have examined some of the sighting reports. In this pattern, I suspect, we shall see the crux of the entire UFO situation—*present as well as past*.

The airship reappeared over Kansas and Nebraska in late March 1897. Sightings did not begin gradually, as they often do in the early stages of modern UFO “flaps”, and there certainly is no justification for the view, expressed by a correspondent of mine, that the airship worked its way eastwards from California after December 1896. There simply were no reports of airships between January and mid-March; but afterwards reports suddenly began to be made in almost staggering numbers.

The first recorded sighting, so far as we know, was made from Belleville, Kansas, on March 25, where at 10 p.m. a “mysterious airship” (not described) passed over the town and was seen by “at least 50 citizens”, according to newspaper accounts. (It appeared on the two following nights as well.) Previous to this, however, it seems to have been observed by ranchers and farmers mostly in northern Kansas and southern Nebraska, but Iowa may have received at least one visitation, if the testimony of Robert Hibbard is to be credited.

Hibbard, who farmed 15 miles north of Sioux City, claimed that one night late in March an “anchor” hanging from a drag rope attached to the rear of an airship caught him in the slack of his trousers and dragged him several dozen feet. When finally his trousers ripped, he said, he fell to the ground. “His reputation for truth-telling has never been bad”, one newspaper noted, “and the general opinion is that he either ‘had ’em’ or dreamed his remarkable experience”.

Another source refers to sightings at Lincoln, Beatrice, “and other Nebraska points,” and at Marysville, Washington, and Hadham, Kansas.

On the night of the 29th, worshippers leaving an Omaha, Nebraska, church saw a strange object pass through the sky, hover and fly away again. It was visible to them for half an hour. Shortly thereafter, residents of the south-east portion of Omaha viewed the ship, seeing a large bright light, “too big for a balloon”. Travelling slowly

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and close to the ground, it disappeared in the north-west behind a series of bluffs just outside the city.

Some of the best reports of the flap were made on the night of April 1, when sightings occurred in both Missouri and Kansas. At 8.15, at Kansas City (in the first state), "thousands of people", claimed the city's newspaper, "saw the mysterious light", as it moved from west to north to south, then back to north. Its altitude varied: it would descend close to the ground, only then to rise rapidly away.

According to the *Kansas City Times*, "The light seemed about the size of a big street light and didn't seem to be as high as the clouds. It shot out a beam of light very much like a search-light. Some of the time the light was white, and then it changed to a bright red. Its general course was towards the north-west, but several times it reversed and travelled for awhile in the opposite direction. It moved with a regular motion, not comet-like. Some said they watched it go out of sight over the northern horizon".

Citizens of Everest, Kansas, watched the airship for an hour and twenty minutes the same night and got a particularly detailed view of the phenomenon.

"For five minutes at one time the airship seemed to skirt the lowest edges of a cloud that hung low down in the heavens and it was then that the powerful lights on board were reflected on the clouds and the outlines of the ship were clearly distinguished.

"The basket or car seemed to be 25 to 30 feet long, shaped like an Indian canoe. Four light wings extended from the car, two wings were triangular. A large dark hulk was discernible immediately above the car and was generally supposed by the watchers to be an inflated gas-bag. That the same power that furnished the light was used for lifting the ship was evident from the fact that the lights grew dim as the ship went upward, and as the ship came nearer the earth, the light was as bright as the light of a locomotive. One observer claimed a blue colour appeared, other than white and red."

Someone, an anonymous 1897 Menzel, had an explanation: the "airship" was not that at all—it was the planet Venus. Upon hearing so, a witness snorted "Venus does not dodge around, fly swiftly across the horizon, swoop rapidly toward the earth, and then soar away until lost in the southern sky".

The same night a guard at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas reported seeing the airship, only to be warned that he would be subject to possible dismissal on grounds of mental illness if he continued to talk about it. But most other Kansans seemed

much more open-minded about the mysterious craft, and it became a favourite subject of conversation among them. An engineer at Fort Leavenworth, suggesting that airships might be used as weapons one day, remarked, "Just think of it—an army corps of soldiers sailing over large cities and shells of every size and description being dropped among the people. The slaughter would be something awful. War now, as compared with war *then*, is mere child's play".

## II

Far away from Kansas, in the Upper Midwestern state of Michigan, the airship passed over the village of Galesburg the night of April 1—one of a number of indications that more than one airship was involved in the 1897 flap. Witnesses reported seeing a brilliant light which revealed the vague shape of the machine's main body; from it emanated both an odd "crackling" noise, apparently the sounds of its motor, and the distinct sounds of human voices.

Four days later, hundreds of Omaha natives sighted a steel cigar-shaped object cruising at an altitude of about three-fourths of a mile. Visible for five minutes, it flew against the wind into clouds, reappeared briefly, and disappeared, moving at a high speed and still against the wind, into the northern sky.

A rash of airship sightings broke out on the nights of the 9th and the 10th, in three states. To mention some of the localities reporting visitations:

Norman, Oklahoma, April 9. Mr. T. J. Wiggins, assistant cashier of the Norman State Bank—"a sober man and a devout church member"—saw a long dark object carrying a very bright light on its end and flashing red lights along its sides. (Two nights later, nearly 400 persons in Norman claimed to have sighted an identical phenomenon.)

Illinois. A brilliantly-lighted construction appeared low in the sky over a lake near Evanston, then flew erratically over the city on a westward course. It was observed at the same time, though at a greater distance, at Niles Center and Schermer-ville.

At 9.30, South Chicagoans watched the airship cross the lake, fly inland, turn slowly to the north-west, and disappear in the darkness. According to the *Chicago Tribune* for April 10.

"At several points the moving wonder was observed by persons equipped with small telescopes or powerful field glasses, and these persons claimed to have described the outlines of the structure bearing lights, the consensus, on the uncertain basis for estimating dimensions of bodies moving through the air at unknown distances, is that the

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main body of the night flyer was about 70 feet in length, of slender proportions and fragile construction.

"To this body, it is reported, were attached the movable headlight and the other lights . . . A few observers claim they also saw, a short distance above the body, lateral structures resembling wings or sails. These appeared to be about 20 feet in width, and as they were seen from one side, their length could not be accurately estimated."

One of the first witnesses, a young jeweller, maintained that the airship was actually two cigar-shaped bodies attached together by girders. Since this sighting occurred apparently in the dusk, while most of the others took place in the dark, it should be taken seriously, in my opinion, as perhaps a more accurate description of the ship's appearance.

If estimates of the object's length are to be accepted literally, an airship, but a smaller one than its Evanston-South Chicago counterpart cruised over Mt. Carroll, Illinois, at 8.40 p.m. Coming out of the north-east, it crossed the city, turned west, and flashed away "at a terrific speed". Witnesses said the phenomenon was about 8 or 10 feet in length and no more than two or three feet high. It was "oblong" in shape and carried a large red light.

Iowa, April 10. At Newton at 8 p.m., 2000 citizens viewed an airship as it hovered over the southwest part of the city for forty minutes. Heading north-west it dropped what looked like a parachute with a light attached to it. Some observers thought this might be a message from the craft's occupants and went out to retrieve it, but newspaper accounts do not say whether the searchers found anything.

The airship also appeared briefly over Eldon at 7.25, Ottumwa at 7.40, and Albia at 8.10.

Illinois. A mysterious object carrying an intense white light took 15 minutes to fly over Galesburg. Viewers who watched it through binoculars estimated it to be at an altitude of three-fourths of a mile.

All of this activity caused Professor George Hough, an astronomer from North-western University, to smile. "Alpha Orionis has been roaming through its regular course in the firmament ten million years", he said, "and why it should have been settled upon in the last three weeks, and pointed out as the headlight of a mysterious aerial vessel, is a hard thing to explain" Not that Professor Hough had ever seen what his "gullible" fellow countrymen called an "airship", of course. He had better things to do, he said.

Joseph Pierson of Evanston sighted red, green and white lights which reflected off two cigar-

shaped bodies. The object—or objects—gave off a "hissing" sound. "This phenomenon," he emphasised, presumably with tongue in check, "took a course entirely out of the route of Alpha Orionis."

### III

An airship followed a train all the way from Howard to Artesian, South Dakota, on the night of the 15th. Conductor Joe Wright told a reporter for the Madison (South Dakota) *Sentinel* that the object appeared just after dusk and flew progressively closer to the ground until it had "passed-out of view", i.e., apparently landed.

Another airship was seen at 9.00 p.m. the same night by observers at Eureka, Kansas. Yet another reportedly approached the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., at an altitude of 600 feet, then sailed for Georgetown and disappeared behind hills back of the city.

Twenty-four hours later, half a dozen Texas cities saw a craft "shaped like a Mexican cigar, large in the middle, and small at both ends, with great wings, resembling those of enormous butterfly. It was brilliantly illuminated by the rays of two great searchlights, and was sailing in a south-easterly direction, with the velocity of wind, presenting a magnificent appearance". (*New York Sun*.)

Three days afterwards, at about 9 p.m. a gigantic object flashed searchlight beams along the ground at Sistersville, West Virginia. According to a reporter, "An examination with strong glasses left an impression of a huge cone-shaped arrangement 180 feet long, with large fins on either side."

### IV

April 19 produced two of the most interesting reports of the flap. The first is the well-known Sistersville incident (see above), described in more detail in Keyhoe's *The Flying Saucers Are Real*. The second is the until-recently unpublicised "operator" report from LeRoy, Kansas, clearly one of the best such stories in the annals of the UFO saga. The witness seems to have been a highly reliable man, and moreover, I have been able, through the efforts of a Kansas correspondent, to obtain further substantiation for the claim.

The Yates Center, Kansas *Farmers' Advocate* for April 23, 1887, reported, "Hon. Alexander Hamilton of Vernon came to town last Wednesday [April 21] and created quite an excitement by announcing that he had been having some experience with the much-talked-of airship. Mr. Hamilton is an old settler, was a member of the legislature in the early days and is known all over Woodson,

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Allen, Coffey, and Anderson counties." Hamilton told the following story to the newspaper :

"Last Monday night about half past ten o'clock we were awakened by a noise among the cattle. I arose, thinking perhaps my bulldog was performing some pranks, but upon going to the door, saw to my utter amazement, an airship slowly descending over my cow lot about forty rods from the house.

"Calling Gid Heslip, my tenant, and my son, Wall, we seized some axes and ran to the corral. Meanwhile the ship had been gently descending until it was not more than 30 feet above the ground and we came up to within 50 yards of it. It consisted of a great cigar-shaped portion possibly 300 feet long with a carriage underneath.

"The carriage was made of panels of glass or other transparent substance, alternating with a narrow strip of some other material. It was brilliantly lighted within and everything was clearly visible. There were three lights : one like an immense searchlight and two smaller, one red the other green. The large one was susceptible of being turned in every direction.

"It was occupied by six of the strangest beings I ever saw. There were two men, a woman, and three children. They were jabbering together but we could not understand a syllable they said. Every part of the vessel which was not transparent was of a dark reddish colour.

"We stood mute in wonder and fright, when some noise attracted their attention and they turned their light directly upon us. Immediately upon catching sight of us, they turned on some unknown power, and a great turbine wheel about 30 feet in diameter, which was slowly revolving below the craft, began to buzz, sounding precisely like the cylinder of a separator, and the vessel rose as lightly as a bird.

"When about 30 feet above us, it seemed to pause, and hover directly over a three-year-old heifer which was bawling and jumping, apparently fast in the fence. Going to her, we found a cable about half an inch in thickness, made of the same red material, fastened in a slip knot around her neck, one end passing up to the vessel and tangled in the wire.

"We tried to get it off but could not, so we cut the wire loose, and stood in amazement to see ship, cow and all rise slowly and sail off, disappearing in the north-west. We went home but I was so frightened I could not sleep but arose Tuesday morning, mounted my horse and started out to find some trace of my cow, but coming back to LeRoy in the evening found that Lank Thomas, who lives in Coffee county about three or four

miles west of LeRoy, had found the hide, legs and head in his field that day.

"He thinking someone had butchered a stolen beast and thrown the hide away, had brought it to town for identification but was greatly mystified in not being able to find a track of any kind on the soft ground. I went home last night but every time I would drop to sleep, I would see the cursed thing with its big lights and hideous people. I don't know whether they are devils or angels or what but we all saw them and my whole family saw the ship and I don't want any more to do with them."

"Mr. Hamilton looked as if he had not entirely recovered from the shock and every one who knew him was convinced he was sincere in every word," the *Advocate* concluded. It published the testimony of prominent citizens who knew Hamilton well :

"As there are now, always have been, and always will be, sceptics and unbelievers, whenever the truth of anything bordering on the improbable is presented, and knowing that some ignorant or suspicious people will doubt the truthfulness of the above statement, now.

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, do hereby make the following affidavit.

"That we have known Alex Hamilton from 15 to 30 years and that for truth and veracity we have never heard his word questioned and that we do verily believe his statement to be true and correct.

E. V. Wharton, State Oil Inspector  
H. H. Winter, Banker  
H. S. Johnson, Pharmacist  
Alex Stewart, Justice of Peace  
F. W. Butler, Druggist  
H. C. Rollins, Postmaster  
M. E. Hunt, Sheriff  
E. K. Kellenberser, M. D.  
J. H. Sticher, Attorney  
H. Waymire, Druggist  
Jas. L. Martin, Register of Deeds

"Subscribed and sworn to before me this 21st day of April, 1897. W. C. Willie, Notary Public."

After copying Hamilton's story, the Burlington *Daily News* printed another affidavit.

"We, the undersigned, residents of Burlington, Kansas, do hereby certify that we have known Mr. Alexander Hamilton ever since he was chased out of Missouri in 1855 [apparently a reference to Hamilton's possible involvements with pro- and anti-slavery elements then in conflict in Missouri and Kansas]; that he was the first County Clerk of the Coffee county; that he is in all respects a

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perfectly truthful and reliable man. And no lover of truth will ever question any statement made by him . . . .

"J. M. Lane, H. E. Cowgill, Orson Kent, Wm. Manson, M. E. Grimes, J. M. Baldwin, David Grimes.

"Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29th day of April, 1897. H. B. Cheney, Notary Public.

A final piece of evidence for Hamilton's veracity is given by his granddaughters, (the daughters of Wallace Hamilton—identified as "Wall" in the narrative), who were interviewed late in 1965 by Mr. Harry Fleenor of Topeka, Kansas. Both women told Mr. Harry Fleenor that the story was a well-known one in their family, and that their grandfather had maintained until his death (in 1912) that he had seen a strange craft and its equally peculiar occupants take off with a heifer calf. Their father, perhaps fearing ridicule, refused to discuss the subject.

V

The next "operator" story which allegedly occurred about the same time (we have been unable to determine the exact date), is less easy to judge because we have less information concerning the witness's character. The man appears to have been fairly prominent, however, and news-references to him are universally favourable. Even the *Arkansas Gazette*, which previously had ridiculed much more "mundane" airship sightings, termed this the "most authentic story printed".

The speaker is Captain James Hooton, described as "the well-known Iron Mountain railroad conductor".

"Of course I saw the airship. There is no doubt in the world about it and you will be safe in banking on what I tell you. It came about in this way :

"I had gone down to Texarkana to bring back a special, and knowing that I would have some eight to ten hours to spare at Texarkana, I went to Homan [Arkansas] to do a little hunting. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when I reached that place. The sport was good, and before I knew it, it was after 6 o'clock when I started to make my way back toward the railroad station. As I was tramping through the bush my attention was attracted by a familiar sound, a sound for all the world like the working of an air pump on a locomotive.

"I went at once in the direction of the sound, and there in an open space of some five or six acres, I saw the object making the noise. To say that I was astonished would but feebly express my feelings. I decided at once that this was the

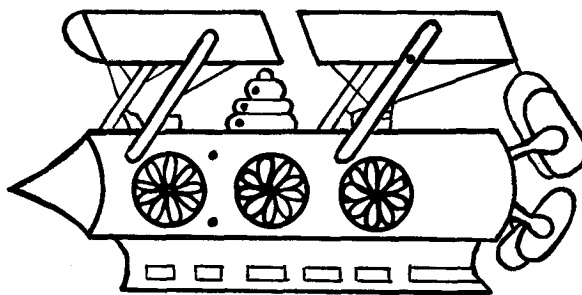
famous airship seen by so many people about the country.

"There was a medium-sized looking man aboard and I noticed that he was wearing smoked glasses. He was tinkering around what seemed to be the back end of the ship, and as I approached I was too dumbfounded to speak. He looked at me in surprise, and said: 'Good day, sir; good day.' I asked: 'Is this the airship?' and he replied: 'Yes, sir', whereupon three or four other men came out of what was apparently the keel of the ship.

"A close examination showed that the keel was divided into two parts terminating in front like the sharp edge of a knife-like edge, while the sides of the ship bulged gradually toward the middle, and then receded. There were three large wheels upon each side made of some bending metal and arranged so that they became concave as they moved forward.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' I said, 'the noise sounds a good deal like a Westinghouse air brake.' 'Perhaps it does, my friend; we are using condensed air and aeroplanes, but you will know more later on.'

"'All ready, sir,' some one called out, when the party all disappeared below. I observed that just in front of each wheel a two-inch tube began to

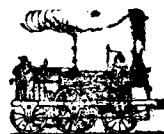


Captain Hooton's picture of the airship

spurt air on the wheels and they commenced revolving. The ship gradually arose with a hissing sound. The aeroplanes suddenly sprang forward, turning their sharp ends skyward, then the rudders at the end of the ship began to veer to one side and the wheels revolved so fast that one could scarcely see the blades. In less time than it takes to tell you, the ship had gone out of sight.

"This drawing I have made you is the best I can do under the circumstances. I consider I was

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fortunate in seeing the ship. You may add that she pumped while standing still like the air pump of an engine. One particular feature I remember is that what I would call the cowcatcher was sharp as the blade of a knife and almost as pointed as a needle. There was no bell or bell rope about the ship that I could discover, like I should think every well regulated air locomotive should have."

The airship Hooton sketched strikes one as being ridiculously improbable in appearance and may constitute a barrier to full acceptance of the story. On the other hand, it may offer circumstantial evidence for it. Somewhat similar ships had been reported before (see particularly the South Chicago airship description), and the fan-shaped wheels on the side figured prominently in some 1896 California sightings with which it is unlikely Hooton was familiar. Alexander Hamilton, remember, reported the presence of a "wheel" connected with the propulsion mechanism, although this one was larger and *beneath* the craft rather than on its side. Further, Hooton's airship bears a definite resemblance to the mysterious machine that crossed New Mexico in 1880. (See Lucius Farish's *An 1880 UFO*, FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, May/June 1965.)

## VI

The 1897 flap had definitely reached its peak after the third week of April, although scattered sightings continued to be made into May. Only one is worth mentioning in detail.

The testimony below is that of two Hot Springs, Arkansas, law officers, Constable Sumpter and Deputy Sheriff McLemore who were on an official duty when they allegedly encountered an airship and its passengers.

"While riding north-west from this city on the night of May 6, 1897, we noticed a brilliant light high in the heavens. Suddenly it disappeared and we said nothing about it, as we were looking for parties and did not want to make any noise. After riding four or five miles around through the hills we again saw the light, which now appeared to be much nearer the earth. We stopped our horses and watched it coming down, until all at once it disappeared behind another hill. We rode on about half a mile further, when our horses refused to go further. About a hundred yards distant we saw two persons moving around with lights. Drawing our winchesters—for we were now thoroughly aroused to the importance of the situation—we demanded: 'Who is that, and what are you doing?'

"A man with a long dark beard came forth with a lantern in his hand, and on being informed who we were proceeded to tell us that he and the

others—a young man and a woman—were traveling through the country in an airship. We could plainly distinguish the outlines of the vessel, which was cigar-shaped and about sixty feet long, and looking just like the cuts that have appeared in the papers recently. It was dark and raining and the young man was filling a big sack with water about thirty yards away, and the woman was particular to keep back in the dark. She was holding an umbrella over her head. The man with the whiskers invited us to take a ride, saying that he could take us where it was not raining. We told him we believed we preferred to get wet.

"Asking the man why the brilliant light was turned on and off so much, he replied that the light was so powerful that it consumed a great deal of his motive power. He said he would like to stop off in Hot Springs for a few days and take the hot baths, but his time was limited and he could not. He said they were going to wind up at Nashville, Tenn., after thoroughly seeing the country. Being in a hurry we left and upon our return, about forty minutes later, nothing was to be seen. We did not hear or see the airship when it departed.

"John J. Sumpter, Jr.

"John M'Lemore.

"Subscribed and sworn to before me this 8th day of May, 1897.

"C. G. Bush, J.P."

The Fort Smith *Daily News Record* noted that while Sumpter and McLemore were subjected to a great deal of ridicule, "they, however, most seriously maintain that it is absolutely true, and their earnestness is puzzling many, who, while unable to accept the story as a fact, yet see that the men are not jesting". The *Arkansas Gazette* added, "As both are men of undoubted integrity, their statement can be fully relied upon as being true".

Especial attention should be paid to one detail in the last paragraph of the affidavit: the relationship between the ship's light and its motive power. We have already seen that independent witnesses had commented that **whenever the ship accelerated its light dimmed**. If Sumpter and McLemore were lying, then, we must conclude that they were quite familiar with other sightings, even those in newspapers that may have been inaccessible to them. (By coincidence or otherwise, in mid-April Illinois farmhands claimed to have come upon an airship also piloted by two men and a woman.)

## VII

Among those who accepted the existence of the airship, there was little doubt that the craft was piloted by terrestrials, presumably American inventors. Except for an editorialist in the Colony,

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Kansas, *Free Press* (who theorised it was a spaceship from Mars), it does not seem to have occurred to anyone that the phenomenon could have been anything more than that. (For an elaboration of this point, see my article *A Contact Claim* in the January/February 1965 FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.) **This may be the single most important fact of the 1897 flap.**

It should be evident that the events of 1897 are not "typical" of UFO activity as we know it today. Indeed, I have even refrained from referring to the airship as a "UFO", for while that is what it was *in the literal sense*, it is not at all like that which we call a "UFO" today. The phenomenon seen in the United States in 1880, 1896 and 1897 (and Wales and New Zealand in 1909 and South Africa in 1914) was an *airship*, a kind of heavier-than-air construction built for limited flights through the immediate atmosphere. It was most decidedly *not* any sort of spacecraft, as modern "flying saucers" appear to be.

In every contact claim of the period, the idea that the ship was a terrestrial construction was bolstered in varying ways conveniently supporting the technology and temperament of the times. It was widely believed that, with the relatively rapid advances in science then being made, an aircraft of some sort would be invented in the near future (just as now interplanetary spaceships are expected in the next few years). Every action of the airship could conceivably have been predicted by Americans of the late Nineteenth Century. Here there were no concepts beyond their comprehension: no UFOs powered by "anti-gravity", no craft of highly advanced design, no "little men" or golden-haired Venusians. Nothing, in short, we who today grant the reality of UFOs have come to expect.

The 1897 contacts were inevitable, if one accepts the premise that limited contact can and does occur. Because of the peculiar nature of the airship, contact could not have been anything other than what it was: reinforced belief in a terrestrial construction. If the operators had been unconcerned with the human reaction to their appearance, they would presumably have flown machines of more advanced design, rather than the almost ludicrous creations cited in contemporary newspapers.

Studying the 1897 reports, one noted ufologist has concluded—and will so argue in a forthcoming book—that the airship was invented by an American scientist. While I do not know whether he has special information which leads him to this conclusion, I rather suspect that his idea is based upon a superficial, somewhat incomplete examination

of the existing data. Certainly, almost everyone who has studied the period at one time or another wonders if terrestrials were completely responsible—there were enough rumours published in the press to confuse anyone. But eventually one must conclude, as Thomas Edison did, that "it is absolutely impossible to imagine that a man could construct a successful airship and keep the matter a secret".

Moreover, to accept this researcher's view, we must believe that our anonymous inventor—and the dozens of persons who would have had to pilot the airships—appeared in New Mexico in 1880, California in 1896, the entire United States in 1897, Wales and New Zealand in 1909, and South Africa in 1914. We must also believe that all this was carried out in virtually complete secrecy—and that since that time nothing has come to light to discredit the role of the Wright Brothers in the creation of the first heavier-than-air machine.

I submit that the truth is more likely to be, as I have assumed throughout this paper, that the airship was extramundane (though not necessarily interplanetary) in origin. Making these assumptions, we suggest that the mystery can be understood if we theorise that the intelligences behind the UFOs (1) wish to mislead us or (2) wish to present themselves **within the context of the observer's environment**. These points may overlap, but they are based upon opposite presumptions about the ufonaut's purpose.

In the first case, we envision a long-term mission carried out by beings from Elsewhere; though not necessarily hostile, these beings do not care to have us know what their identity and purpose are, and so have contrived (through subtlety, their more obvious activities, the messages imparted in contact) to give us false ideas about them. (For a more detailed discussion, see my *The Meaning of Contact*, FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, September/October 1965.) What they are doing here is not particularly relevant in the formation of this hypothesis though I hope to discuss this subject in a later article.

To mislead us, the ufonauts assume a character easiest for us both to believe and to understand. In ancient times the superstitious called them gods or wizards, and we have an odd story, cited by W. R. Drake (*Spacemen in Norman Times*, FLYING SAUCER REVIEW March/April, 1966), in which beings announce they are from "Magonia" or "Magus"—"magic land". Paul Misraki (Paul Thomas) in his excellent *Flying Saucers through the Ages* (Neville Spearman, 1965), argues that the angels of the Bible were actually UFO entities. Today, in the "Space Age" we are led to believe that "flying saucers" are spacecraft. In April 1897, then—six and a half years before Kitty

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Hawk—what more logical than a terrestrial aircraft?

In the second theory we follow much of the same reasoning, but we take a less suspicious view of the motives of our visitors. Perhaps, we speculate, the UFO beings **cannot** make extensive contact with us, by reason of the very nature of the UFO. Unable to land and prove conclusively their existence, they attempt to make themselves known by showing themselves in forms that witnesses are able to comprehend—airships in 1897, spaceships in 1947. If they appeared in their **true** form, they might well be so strange that we might not recognise them at all. Presumably, as in the passing of time human knowledge and consciousness expand, the UFO mystery will continue to evolve until at last we understand what it really means.

Admittedly, here we are involved in speculation of a grand order. I should make clear, however that these latter suggestions are not generally original with me, but with a ufologist whose writings, under the name "Peter Kor", have appeared

in several American UFO magazines. Kor, in creating a series of highly complex hypotheses relative to the UFO problem, has argued that researchers have completely misinterpreted the significance of the mystery they are dealing with. While he is not always totally convincing, Kor is mapping out important new territory that we would do well to explore, and we must not ignore him.

At any rate, whatever the truth may ultimately prove to be, I submit that the 1897 wave indicates the futility of any attempt to divorce flying objects from the general situation in which they operate. It may well be, as Kor has written, that individual reports only hinder our understanding of the enigma. Perhaps saucers in particular mean very little, saucers in general everything.

The airship, then, may be one of the greatest clues to the enigma. Its lesson for researchers into the Post-Arnold period should be obvious. Whether we are being duped intentionally or whether the UFOs simply cannot meet us on their terms, they have created a much deeper mystery than most of us are willing to concede.

#### HISTORICAL NOTE

Speaking as an aeronautical historian who specialises in the periods before 1910, I can say with certainty that the only airborne vehicles, carrying passengers, which could possibly have been seen anywhere in North America in 1897 were free flying spherical balloons, and it is highly unlikely for these to be mistaken for anything else. No form of dirigible (i.e. a gasbag propelled by an airscrew) or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying—or indeed **could** fly—at this time in America.

Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, M.A., F.M.A.,  
Hon. Companion of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

#### JOINING THE TEAM...

The Editor is pleased to announce that Mr. R. H. B. Winder, C.Eng. B.Sc., A.M.I.M.E., has accepted an invitation to act as engineering consultant to the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.

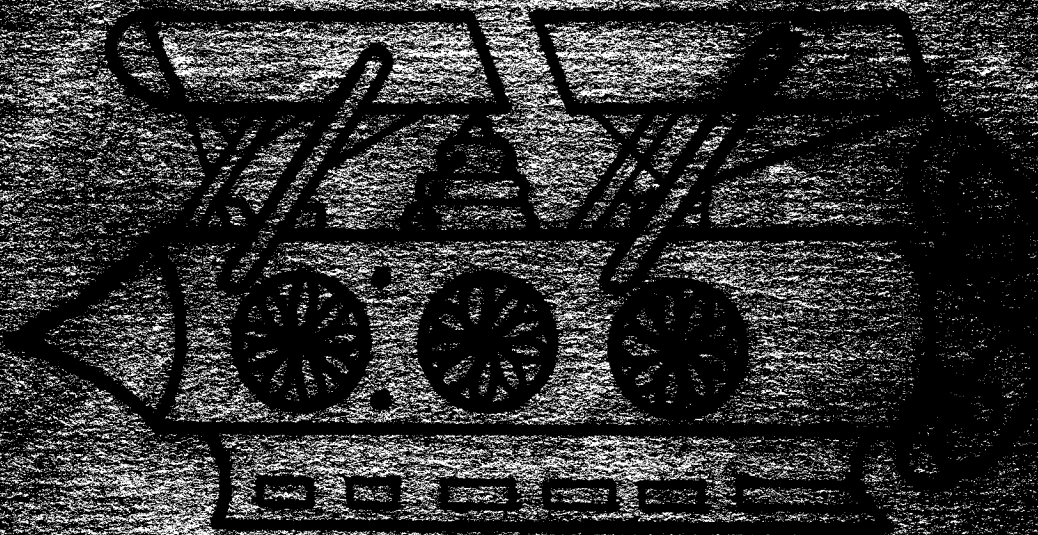
Mr. Winder, who obtained his honours B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering at Leeds University in 1944, has devoted his career to mechanical research and design, with emphasis on advanced concepts and automation. His early interest in the UFO mystery fell dormant about 1952, but was re-awakened in 1960 after reading the Ruppelt and Keyhoe books, and "discovering" the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.

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# FLYING SAUCER REVIEW

JULY - AUGUST 1968



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THE STRANGE CASE OF THE ...



FSR, N<sup>o</sup> 4, 1967

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# MORE ON 1897

by Jerome Clark



Our contributor from Minnesota makes a welcome return to the columns of FLYING SAUCER REVIEW after a long illness.

THE 1897 UFO wave has been ignored far too long. Until 1965 UFO students had been little more than aware of its existence, relying upon the incomplete and somewhat misleading data of Fort,<sup>1</sup> Keyhoe,<sup>2</sup> and Ruppelt.<sup>3</sup> With the appearance of Jacques Vallée's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*—which drew attention to the LeRoy incident—interest in the period has grown considerably, and preliminary studies into the "airship" and related matters have already been published in the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW by Vallée, Donald Hanlon, Lucius Farish, and this writer.<sup>4</sup> Gordon Lore of the NICAP staff has written an important new book, to be published this year, that will deal in part with the airship.

It is now evident that the 1897 flap contains within it a number of highly significant clues to the UFO problem, and I suspect that a really thorough search through newspaper morgues, files of state historical societies, etc., would uncover masses of data that might place the general enigma in a new and radically different context. Even today, it seems to me, the "traditional" theories of ufologists are becoming increasingly irrelevant in the new light of the 1897 evidence. The relatively simple picture drawn by Keyhoe, Hall, Lorenzen, Oberth and most other serious investigators may eventually have to be discarded and replaced with—who knows?

### A Photograph

In common with its latter-day counterpart, the "flying saucer," the airship was photographed. Although to my knowledge none of these photographs has survived, the following account, discovered by Farish, is interesting because of its extreme detail. The photographer and speaker is Mr. C. D. Lawrence, a view artist:

"At 5.15 this morning (April 26) I was awakened by someone who ran into the house, arousing the inmates with the explanation that a large balloon was hovering over Baring Cross, beyond the upper bridge. The house where I was stopping is located near the power house of the street railway company, commanding an excellent view of that portion of the city where the mystery was seen. With other members of the household I hurried out and saw what at first appeared to be a very large balloon moving toward the south at a very rapid rate. It was coming end-on and I soon saw that it was not a balloon but the airship about which we have so long been reading. It approached toward the river, and then suddenly veered towards the east and after proceeding a short distance, turned northward, soon disappearing from sight, after having been visible for at least fifteen minutes. I secured a negative while

it appeared broad-side toward the amazed observers, and as you may see a very good view was secured. The negative shows a large cylindrical body pointed at both ends like a cigar, apparently about forty feet in length, although it was seen at such an altitude that no one could accurately judge of its dimensions. A car, in which the navigators of the vessel resided, depended from the buoyant body, being a large box-like arrangement, from which a heavy anchor depended by means of a long rope.<sup>5</sup> The propeller is arranged at one of the ends of the ship, as is plainly shown in the negative. I could not, of course, definitely give the velocity, but I think I am safe in saying that it could not have been less than fifty miles an hour. The testimony of the large number who witnessed the strange sight would be conclusive evidence of its genuineness, even if I had not been so fortunate as to secure this negative."

### A Contact

The next story appeared in the Harrisburg, Arkansas, *Modern News* for April 23, 1897. I am, frankly, quite sceptical of this account, mainly because of its suspiciously excessive detail. But several points are significant: for one, we have here probably the first reference to a UFO powered by "anti-gravity", a feature not to become prominent until the advent of the post-1947 contact claims. Secondly, the aeronaut expresses an interest in terrestrial political problems, especially the plight of the Cuban people under Spanish rule; an April 15 contact near Springfield, Illinois, had the airship's occupants discussing the same topic.<sup>6</sup> Third, as a point of *possible* corroboration, Mr. Harris's mention of an "old gentleman (who) wore a heavy set of dark, silken whiskers, which hung down near his waist", is reminiscent of Sumpter and McLemore's "man with a long dark beard".<sup>7</sup> Harris's airship allegedly contained a crew of, in addition to the old man, two young men and a woman; Sumpter and McLemore reported an elderly man, a young man and a woman. On the minus side, a search through the files of a Dallas daily newspaper did not turn up any reported sightings of an airship shortly after midnight of the morning of April 21.

I am presenting this claim, despite my reservations, for the record. Parts of the story had faded so badly on the newspaper page that they were impossible to read. Where this had happened, I have so indicated with a dash.

"The airship of which we have read so much of late has caused considerable comment but no one ever dreamed that it would ever be anchored in Harrisburg. Wednesday night (April 21) Ex-Senator Harris was

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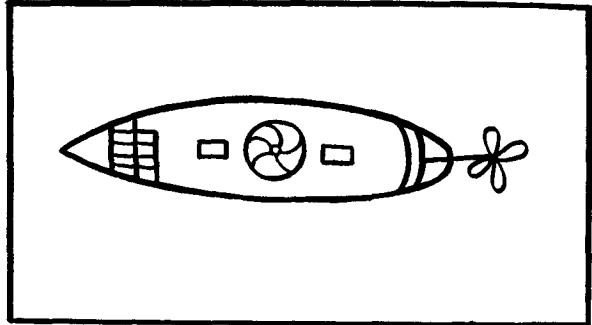
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awakened about 1 o'clock by an unfamiliar noise, and upon taking a peep out he spied a peculiar looking object in the west. Instantly he thought of the wonderful airship which had so mystified the people of the west during the past few weeks, and hurriedly dressing he took his field glass and went out in the yard where he could get a good view. The first sight through the glass satisfied him that it was a wonderful airship. As the object came nearer he could discern the shape, but in a few seconds it came so near he threw down his glass. The mysterious flyer paused and gradually descended to within a few feet of the ground and only a short distance from Mr. Harris's yard. Mr. Harris says there was an elderly man, a woman and two young men on board. The old gentleman wore a heavy set of dark, silken whiskers, which hung down near his waist. He had jet black eyes and a deep, firm expression. Mr. Harris said he walked out a little nearer and hailed the old gentleman. The old man seemed a little surprised when he spoke, not expecting to see any one out at that hour of night, but he spoke pleasantly, and after taking on a supply of fresh well water, he said:

"Well, you seem to be a very clever man, and if you will promise not to divulge my secret in a way to do me harm, I will tell you the whole story, except how the effect is produced."

"After receiving satisfactory assurance, he continued:

"(—) you remember about 26 years (ago?), what is now called the *St. Louis Republic* was then the *St. (—)*. It changed to (—) and later to the (—), about 26 years ago (—) was, the *St. Louis Times (—)* exclusively, an account of a scientific invention made by a gentleman, whose name I will not mention, by which the laws of gravitation were entirely and completely suspended. He was offered big sums of money for it by several syndicates in this country, and also had large offers from parties at Paris, London and many other places. During the time he was considering these offers he was taken violently ill, and after lingering a few weeks died, leaving his invention in the vault. This man was my uncle and he had partially confided the secret to me, but not sufficiently for me to do anything without the original invention. After the lapse of about 19 years I managed to secure the original, and having plenty of money at my disposal and having devoted my time and talent during the past seven years to experimenting, I have an airship which is almost perfection, but I am not quite through experimenting, and so I continue to travel at night to keep from being detected. I will make an attempt to visit the planet Mars before I put the airship on public exhibition. Weight is no object to me. I suspend all gravitation by placing a small wire around an object. You see I have a 4-ton improved Hotchkiss gun on board, besides



A newspaper reporter's sketch of an airship which passed over Nashville, Arkansas, late in April 1897.

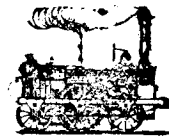
about ten tons of ammunition. I was making preparations to go over to Cuba and kill out the Spanish army if hostilities had not ceased, but now my plans are changed and I may go to the aid of the Armenians. To this improved gun we only have to pour the cartridges into a hopper and press a button and it fires 63,000 times per minute. No, gravitation is not in my way. I place my wire around this 4-ton gun and hold it out with one hand and take aim. Oh, I could place my anti-gravitation wire around the national capital building and take it by the dome and bring it over and set it down in Harrisburg as easy as I could an ink stand. Distance is almost overcome; why, we came over the suburbs of Dallas at 12.10, less than an hour ago, and we have travelled very slowly. I could take breakfast here, do my shopping in Paris and be back here for dinner without inconvenience, as soon as I get my new propellers completed."

"He said he must be off before anyone else was disturbed and invited Mr. Harris to take a ride with him, but he kindly declined the offer. He bade Mr. Harris adieu and floated up and drifted away to a place among the stars and in a few seconds was hid beyond the darkness of the night."

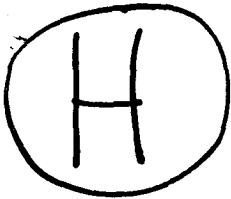
#### References

- <sup>1</sup> Charles Fort, *New Lands*, 1923.
- <sup>2</sup> Donald E. Keyhoe, *The Flying Saucers Are Real*, 1950.
- <sup>3</sup> Edward J. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, 1956.
- <sup>4</sup> Donald B. Hanlon and Jacques Vallée, *Airships over Texas*: FSR, January/February 1967.
- Hanlon, *Texas Odyssey of 1897*: FSR, September/October 1966.
- Lucius Farish, *An 1880 UFO*: FSR, May/June 1965.
- Jerome Clark, *A Contact Claim*: FSR, January/February 1965.
- Clark, *The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship*: FSR, July/August 1966.
- <sup>6</sup> See the Sioux City, Iowa, and Merkel, Texas, reports. (*Strange Case . . .* p. 10, and *Texas Odyssey . . .* p.10, respectively.)
- <sup>7</sup> *A Contact Claim*, p.31.
- <sup>7</sup> *Strange Case . . .* p.15.

NOTE: The author wishes to thank Mr. Lucius Farish of Plumerville, Arkansas, one of the real pioneers of 1897 research, for the information used in this article.



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## THE 1897 STORY - I

By Jerome Clark & Lucius Farish



THE FILE on the great UFO flap of 1897—if and when it is published *in toto*—will be both immense and revealing. It will spotlight a major but almost completely unrecognised area of human experience: the relationship between unexplained phenomena and mankind; and, properly understood, it will enable us to interpret the vast mysteries suggested by the appearance of unknown aerial vessels in our own time. It will show us how limitations in human consciousness prevent acknowledgment of the real nature of extramundane occurrences; even more important, it will demonstrate how these limitations affect *the occurrences themselves*.

Most students of the Unknown, unfortunately, have yet to grasp this last point. If they did, they would find that the forces responsible for all those manifestations of what Allen Greenfield likes to call “alternate reality” (whatever *that* means) possess remarkable insight into human perception, to the degree that these forces (however they choose to pose) can appear or disappear, or communicate nonsense or remain silent, or merely imply what they know will be inferred. They cannot mask all of their activities, but they can make certain that what we experience is not what actually happened. On another level (and they work on many levels, partially because they are in conflict) they can deliberately show themselves in attempts to establish limited contacts for specific objectives, only adapting guises to prevent those they approach from going insane or dying from sheer fright.

These considerations must enter strongly into any theorising whose point of departure is 1897. Evidently, contact of one kind was being sought, and contact of another kind was being avoided. Contact whose intention was to reinforce the carefully nurtured terrestrial origin idea was not at all uncommon. Such incidents, in fact, numbered in the thousands.

### A case of deception ?

In the contacts we have uncovered to date, however, we have not found anything about the purpose of the whole affair. Is there anything at all important contained in these contacts—anything we can infer beyond the observation that the ufonauts used deception? *How much* deception? Are the “messages” imparted by the airships’ occupants of no significance, or are there truths in them, hidden somewhere amidst the lies that are not readily apparent? In other words, were the incidents of 1897 an attempt by the ufonauts to establish a kind of communication with us—or were they a means, instead, to keep us as far as possible from an awareness of what they were and what they were doing?

Obviously, if the ufonauts were attempting to impart something to us, it was not that superhuman agencies were operating on Earth—something quite the contrary. But by flying over cities, following trains, landing, and

in other ways revealing themselves to tens of thousands of Americans, the airships insured, whether intentionally or not, that they would be sighted by great numbers of witnesses.

*Something* was going on between human beings and ufonauts, or the latter would never have gone to the trouble of assuming the “terrestrial” rôle. What this “something” was, what the place of the 1897 events in the history of humanity’s dealings with entities from elsewhere is, what the ufonauts have tried to tell us or not to tell us—these are matters that publication of the whole 1897 story may clear up.

### The Midwestern “airship” story unfolds

Newspapers in the Midwestern United States first became aware of strange objects in the air when reporters began wiring in accounts of a glowing fireball. The Hudson, Michigan, *Post*, in a dispatch out of Jefferson, related that on March 26: “A beautiful ball of fire was seen in the clouds of this place. For a short time it was very bright, and then it appeared to go down. It lasted for some time.” And, according to the Grand Traverse *Herald* for April 1: “A beautiful ball of fire was seen in the clouds near Holland the other night. One moment it was brilliant, the next dimmed, as if covered by a veil. It lasted about an hour.”

Then events began to crystallise with an account from Galesburg, Michigan. On the night of March 31, at about 10 o’clock, a brilliant white object, accompanied by “a sharp crackling sound”, soared over the city and was visible for 30 seconds or so. One of the witnesses maintained that the phenomenon was a huge black object tipped with flame and flying far above the earth. A Mrs. Wyngate, in nearby Charleston township, swore that she heard human voices from above at the time of the sighting.

As excitement about the airship swept through mid-America, some curious persons stayed out nights to watch for signs of the construction, and one man claimed to have had a terrifying experience as the occupants of the craft tried either to kidnap him or just to play some weird practical joke. One night Robert Hibbard, tramping about his Iowa farm hoping to see the airship, caught sight of a dark object, lighted on each side by what appeared to be incandescent lamps, as it flew in from the south at a mile altitude. When it came directly over his head, the machine changed direction and descended until a grapnel attached to the end of a drag rope hooked his trousers. Then the ship rose again and headed back in the direction it had come. Terrified, Hibbard was dragged some distance, saving himself only when he grabbed on to a small sapling with both hands. The hook tore through his pants, and the airship continued on its way.

Iowa had a large number of sightings throughout late

March and early April. One of them, one of several during the period involving railroads, was made by station agents and operators all along the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway on April 8. First seen at Cedar Rapids at 9 p.m., an airship moved slowly down the line until it faded from view an hour later. A newspaper account describes it as "having a bright, glaring headlight revealing a glistening steel hull, dim wing-like projections on each side, and producing a hissing sound as it glides through the air."

Another railroad story came from engineer F. L. Bullard, on engine 950 of the fast mail, whose train a large airship raced out of Chicago. The airship, by Bullard's estimate, travelled 150 miles an hour as it rapidly outdistanced the locomotive.

#### Message from "Pegasus"

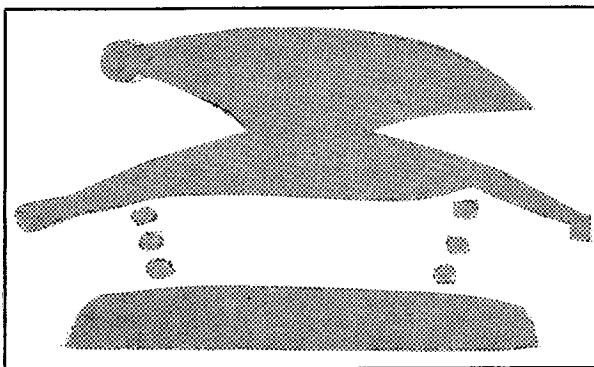
Residents of Appleton, Wisconsin, saw the mysterious object pass over their city on the night of the 11th, and a few days later, N. B. Clark, a farmer living north of the town, found an 18in. iron rod sticking in the ground. Attached to it, he told a local newspaper, was an unsigned letter:

Aboard the Airship "Pegasus", April 9, 1897—The problem of aerial navigation has been solved. The writers have spent the past month cruising about in the airship "Pegasus" and have demonstrated to their entire satisfaction that the ship is a thorough success. We have been able to attain a speed of 150 miles an hour and have risen to a height of 2,500 feet above sea level.

The "Pegasus" was erected at a secluded point ten miles from Layfayette, Tenn., and the various parts of the machine were carried overland from Glasgow, Ky., to that point, being shipped from Chicago, Pittsburg and St. Louis. We have made regular trips of three days each from Layfayette to Yaukon, and no harm has come to the "Pegasus" thus far.

Within a month our application for the patents for a parallel plane air ship will be filed simultaneously at Washington and the European capitals. The ship is propelled by steam and is lighted by electricity and has a carrying power of 1,000 pounds.

■ Hundreds of Holland, Michigan, residents watched an airship floating over Black Lake at 8.35 on the night



This sketch of an unknown airship that passed over Holland, Michigan, appeared in the Benton Harbor Evening News of April 19, 1897.

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of the 11th. "It was a large dark mass," stated the Grand Rapids Evening Press the next day, "apparently lighted with coloured electric lights." After hovering for several minutes, it travelled north-west "in a zig-zag style" and soon disappeared from sight.

In the midst of all this, odd tales of an unknown four-legged creature began to circulate. The Niles, Michigan, Weekly Mirror for April 14 reported, "That terrible animal that made its appearance near Pine Lake and Edwardsburg last year came again the latter part of the week. The men spearing on Pine Lake made for the shore rapidly and three guns were fired in the direction of the terrible noise." Whatever this "terrible noise" was, the creature escaped. The Saginaw Evening News a few days later noted that the animal had slaughtered sheep and cattle, and resembled a panther.\*

At about the same time various people in the Niles area saw a huge lighted object (on the night of the 11th), and an airship put in an appearance at Pine Lake just several days later, according, at least, to the nearly incredible testimony of William Megiveron.

Megiveron told the Lansing State Republican that on the night of the 15th he was awakened by a tap on his window, and when he opened his eyes, an intense glare of light nearly blinded him. Stepping outside, he heard a voice from above him. The voice explained that the light emanated from the airship, which had lain concealed behind a bank of clouds since afternoon, when a stray shot from a duckhunter's gun had injured one of the wings. The occupants had been working on repairs since then, the voice said. It then asked for four dozen egg sandwiches and a kettle of coffee for the crew. After Megiveron had complied, a large scoop containing Canadian quarters in payment was lowered from the clouds and pulled back up when the supplies had been loaded on.

The witness thought the craft hovered at an altitude of 300ft., and that it might be as much as half a mile long. All he could see, however, were the outlines of the machine, due to the brilliant searchlight "which made everything below as bright as day and above as dark as midnight during a cyclone."

Megiveron asked several times to be taken aboard, but hoots of laughter greeted each request. He suspected that the crew might have been drinking, since they had asked for a corkscrew.

Whatever the case, just as dawn started to break, the airship took off, heading toward the city.

At least twenty persons observed an airship hovering above the Battle Creek, Michigan, sanatorium on the night of the 12th. According to them, the craft was all ablaze with lights. Describing the phenomenon, a Mr. Dixon said, "The upper part was in the form of a cone, from which was suspended a large object, cylindrical in form. At the rear end of the lower object was some kind of wheel, which made a buzzing sound that was distinctly heard."

Suddenly there was an explosion. Sparks flew, and the ship began to descend from an altitude of a mile down to a half-mile. Another explosion sounded, sparks flew from the wheel, and the craft began to rise again. Its two lights—a red one in front, a light blue one behind—went out, and it no longer could be seen.



### Explosion over Kalamazoo

At Kalamazoo, George W. Somers and William Chadburn saw a lighted object passing over them at a great speed. Within moments they heard a dull explosion, followed by a sound as of projectiles flying through the air. Several other people told the newspapers that they, too, had heard an explosion, but had passed it off as thunder.

"But the discoveries of the morning are sufficient to establish the veracity of the two actual observers," noted the Bay City *Times-Press*. "In one place, two miles from Scotts, there was found a large coil of heavy wire, evidently a part of some electrical appliance. At another point a propeller blade of some very light material was discovered in a partially fused condition. Three men engaged in shingling a barn in Comstock township affirm that, upon resuming work on the morning following the occurrence, they found their completed work covered with minute fragments which had in some instances penetrated the shingles and entered the boards beneath."

In a related incident, the next evening an airship crossed over lower Michigan; among the witnesses were Mr. and Mrs. George Parks of Pennfield, who saw a very bright "humming" object flying about 100ft. above their farm. When a portion of it broke off and buried itself into the ground, Parks' wife, badly frightened, would not let her husband approach it.

The next morning Parks and his brother Benjamin dug it up and found a large aluminium wheel, three feet in diameter and in the shape of a turbine. "This is the first time," Parks commented, "that I ever heard of a meteor having wheels." Not particularly impressed, the Saginaw *Courier-Herald* asked, "Will someone tell how an aluminium wheel, made presumably as light as possible consistent with required strength, would fall and bury itself so far in the ground that it would have to be dug up?"

A number of reports on the 12th, in any case, suggest that a crippled airship may have been in operation. At 2.30 p.m. a craft landed at the farm of Z. Thacker near Nilwood, Illinois, and was seen by three men. At 6, a large crowd of miners watched it alight in a grove north of the Green Ridge mining camp. The craft fled as the observers began walking toward it. Sightings were later made at Sherman (8 p.m.) and Williamsville (8.45). "Those who saw it," stated a newspaper account, "say it had a boat which was cigar-shaped, with ears or wings extending from the side, and a canopy on the top similar to a picnic stand." Near Green Ridge a mine operator while hunting saw a man working on the airship's machinery. "The fact of its alighting twice and remaining such a long time in the same locality," the newspaper writer suggested, "leads to the conclusion that the machinery was injured in some manner."

On the 13th, lumberman James G. Macpherson, eating supper in the dining car of a train stopped at Spooner, Wisconsin, had his attention drawn to a strange ruddy glow in the sky. Macpherson estimated it to be ten miles away at first, but in 15 minutes it had flown within half a mile of the train. The witness could not see any definite shape with his naked eye but was certain that he would have been able to with the aid

of binoculars. The light "dipped" and then flew away, and was quickly lost to sight.

Professor John Friske of Harvard, a writer on scientific subjects, was another witness to the sighting. Friske told a reporter that anyone who had doubts about the airship's existence should direct his questions to him.

Warned that the airship was approaching, over 150 persons gathered at the depot in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the same night. The story had been telegraphed from Merrillan by an operator who had seen the craft himself. Shortly afterwards, some of the spectators, among them the Eau Claire depot agent, viewed the high-flying construction through field glasses.

About the same time that night, several individuals in Waukegan, Illinois, watched a red light moving on an erratic course for the north. It was visible for about an hour. Earlier, an object with blue, red and green lights sailed over Benton Harbor and St. Joseph in Michigan. William Peckmann sighted a similar phenomenon over Adrian.

### Creature Report

According to several Michigan newspapers, a curious incident occurred at about 4.30 on the afternoon of the 14th, when a balloon-like object, after hovering for an hour near Reynolds, descended and alighted on the ground. A group of farmers cautiously approached and were able to observe a "strange man," 9ft. in height, sitting inside the craft. Next to him lay stacks of heavy clothes "which looked like the pelts of polar bears," yet he was almost naked, as if suffering from the heat.

ADVERTISEMENT

## BUFORA NEWS

### Northern Conference in Manchester

The Direct Investigation Group On Aerial Phenomena will be acting as hosts. The conference will be held on Saturday, 12th October 1968 in the Friends Meeting House, Manchester. For tickets and details, send a S.A.E. to Mrs. J. Nelstrop, Hon. Sec., DIGAP, 5, Ridgmont Road, Bramhall, Cheshire.

### Local Societies

BUFORA now has over 21 affiliated societies and groups. Most of these hold meetings locally and several issue their own publications. A list of organisations is published in BUFORA JOURNAL.

For details of the BRITISH UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, its London lectures and BUFORA JOURNAL, send a 9in. x 4in. S.A.E. to Miss C. Henning (FSR), 99, Mayday Gardens, London S.E.3.

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His speech sounded like bellowing. One farmer walked over to the being, apparently in an attempt to communicate, but the creature, none too hospitable evidently, kicked him savagely and broke his hip.

Reported the *Saginaw Courier-Herald* in a dispatch out of Reynolds, "Great excitement prevails here, and lots of people are flocking here from Morley and Howard City to view the strange being at a distance, as no one dares to go near. He seems to be trying to talk to the people. The people here are incredulous, and those who have not seen refuse to believe the report, although six of the best people in that locality are here and affirm that it is the truth. From their excited manners we are led to believe that no hoax exists. His balloon seems to be out of repair. At 8.10 last evening the airship passed south and a little west of Howard City. Hundreds of people watched its flight."

Other reports of airships were made at Constantine and Battle Creek, Michigan, and Hillsboro, Illinois, that night. In each case witnesses told of sighting red lights on the craft.

NOTE

\* See Charles Bowen's *Mystery Animals*, FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, November/December 1964.

FURTHER READING

- Jerome Clark, *A Contact Claim*, FSR, January/February 1965.  
*The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship*, FSR, July/August 1966.  
*More on 1897*, FSR, July/August 1967.  
Gordon W. Creighton, *Saucers and South Africa*, FSR, September/October 1962.  
Lucius Farish, *An 1880 UFO*, FSR, May/June 1965.  
Donald B. Hanlon, *Texas Odyssey of 1897*, FSR, September/October 1966.  
— and Jacques Vallée, *Airships over Texas*, FSR, January/February 1967.  
W. H. Watson, *19th Century Paraglider?* FSR, November/December 1967.

# 1.948 TWENTY YEARS BACK

By Brinsley le Poer Trench



DURING the course of the hearing on UFOs before the House Armed Services Committee of Congress on April 5, 1966, Major Hector Quintanilla, Jr., head of the U.S. Air Force project Bluebook, was asked by Congressman Richard S. Schweiker of Pennsylvania if it was true that none of the UFOs had been tracked on radar.

The major replied: "We have no radar cases which are unexplained."<sup>1</sup>

This, of course, was an ambiguous and unsatisfactory reply. Whether the major intended to imply that no UFOs had ever been tracked on radar or whether radar sightings had all been rationally explained during his own tenureship of office is not clear. However, his answer could not have done our cause any good in front of the powerful committee.

Certainly, any implication that UFOs have not been tracked on radar must be refuted and nailed down once and for all.

In 1948, especially during the last quarter, there were many instances of UFOs being picked up on radar. I think it useful to close my 1948 casebook with a look at some of these.

On December 27, 1949, Project Saucer was finally closed down and soon afterwards succeeded by Project Sign. (Both these projects were prior to the formation of Bluebook in 1951). Aimé Michel in his excellent book<sup>2</sup> gives credit to Major Donald E. Keyhoe for digging out the following cases from the final report of Project Saucer. These cases are given here verbatim from that report.

Case 188. Goose Bay, Labrador, October 29, 1948: A non-astronomical phenomenon traced by radar. The experts should investigate the evidence.

Case 189. Goose Bay again, October 31, 1948: An identical phenomenon, followed by radar.

Case 196. Object travelling against the wind. Observed by radar.

Case 198. A spot on the radar screen moving rapidly and changing direction continuously.

It is interesting to note, too, what one of Major Quintanilla's predecessors at Project Bluebook has to tell us about radar sightings in 1948. The late Edward J. Ruppelt described in his book<sup>3</sup> how on October 15, 1948, an F-61, a World War II "Black Widow" night fighter, was flying over Japan *when it got a UFO on its radar*. The object was at an altitude of about 5,000-6,000ft., and moving about at 200 mph. The fighter tried to get close but the UFO accelerated to around 1,200 mph, far outstripping its pursuer. Ruppelt wrote that the aircrew made six attempts to close in on the UFO. However, on one attempt they did get close enough to observe that the UFO was about 20 to 30ft. long and shaped "like a rifle bullet".

Ruppelt went on to relate how a wire was received from Germany on November 23, giving details of what he emphasised was the first report where *a UFO was seen from the air and simultaneously tracked on radar*. This concerned an air force pilot who spotted what looked like a reddish star moving in a southerly direction across Munich. The pilot called base operations and they contacted the radar station. At first radar reported seeing nothing, but after checking again called back to state they did have a target at 27,000ft, some 30 miles south of Munich, travelling at 900 mph. The pilot reported that the object he saw was now in that area. A few minutes later radar called again to say that the UFO had climbed to 50,000ft. and was circling 40 miles south of Munich.

Ruppelt added that the Air Weather Service stated the object was not a balloon. No other aircraft was in the area.

The cases that I have outlined indicate quite clearly that as long ago as 1948 UFOs were being tracked on radar over such widely scattered areas as Germany, Japan and the United States.

Since then there have been a great many radar trackings of UFOs. The late Frank Edwards in his last book<sup>1</sup> states that the Civil Aeronautics Administration  
(continued on page 22)

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## THE 1897 STORY Part 2

By Jerome Clark and Lucius Farish



ON the morning of April 15, 1897, citizens of Linn Grove, Iowa, saw a large construction moving northward slowly, and several of them—identified as James Evans, F. G. Ellis, Ben Buland, David Evans and Joe Croskey—followed it out into the country, thinking that it might land. About four miles from town, it did. But when its pursuers got within 700 yards of it, the craft spread out its four monstrous wings and flew away. As it rose, its occupants tossed out two boulders "of unknown composition."

Concerning the beings aboard the machine, a news account mentions "two queer-looking persons . . . who made desperate efforts to conceal themselves." The observers said the entities had the longest beards they had ever seen in their lives. (Airship occupants with very long beards figure in two Arkansas contact claims of the period.)

A large dark balloon passed over Shelby, Michigan, at 9 that evening. Viewers described it as having two lights, one white and one green. At Middleville at exactly the same time, "moving and changing lights" coloured red, blue and green appeared in the southwest sky as they travelled northward and downward. An hour and a half later, another object rose out of the east and floated southwestward. This one was shaped like a large balloon with an attached car which possessed coloured lights and which scattered smoke. At 11, college students in Olivet saw three red lights moving rapidly and at great altitude.

To the local paper several Hudson residents gave their impressions of the airship that overflew their city late at night:

Gene Knapp: "It's no hoax about that airship. We had just drove [sic] down to the depot when some of the boys called my attention to the bright red light which seemed to be sailing into town from the west. It looked like a shooting star at first, but when it got down opposite us, on West Main street, we saw a green light about 25 feet from it, and sure, right there before our eyes. We saw the outline of a dark object against the sky, and some of 'em thought they could see several men aboard. It looked as if one of 'em was trying to wave his hat at us."

Charlie Lane: "This is no mariner's yarn. As sure as I live, I saw the airship last night. How high was it? About 400 feet from the ground I should say. Shape? Cigar-shaped and covered with a canvas canopy. It sailed right along rapidly and easily against the wind, which did not seem to have any effect on it."

Sid Lawrence: "It was certainly 25 feet long, had a rudder, was quite a curiosity."

Professor George J. Tripp, asked his opinion, said, "How do I account for it? I don't try to"—then tried to. "I think it was a star the people saw. I would like to have trained my telescope on it, anyway, that would have settled it. Of course, I didn't see it at all, but how

do I account for its moving so fast? Hallucination, some men's minds move swifter than others." So much for the scientific approach.

Mentioning a sighting made by many persons at Charlotte the night before, the April 16 *Detroit Evening News* noted, "Charlotte is a dry town." So much, too, for the perceptiveness of journalists.

After an airship passage the previous night, pressmen at the office of the *Battle Creek Daily Moon* found a large sailor's needle at the door; attached to it was a letter, purportedly from the airship's crew, relating that the craft had flown from San Francisco to the Great Lakes in one day and was now on the return trip.

### "Driven by steam"

Saginaw hosted mysterious aerial phenomena in the early morning hours of the 16th. Shortly after midnight, a cloud-like object, dimly lighted, came out of the southwest and kept on a northbound course "at a terrific rate of speed." At 2.45, as they patrolled on the corner of Astor and Jefferson, Roundsman Halsey and Patrolman Foley of the police force heard what sounded like the rattle of a drum. Looking up, they sighted a cigar-shaped machine and something hanging about 10 feet below the main body, carrying a red and yellow light that appeared to be shining through canvas. The airship travelled at approximately 25 miles per hour, by the policemen's estimate. A telephone workman, Thomas S. Prentice, claimed to have seen the object from the west side of the river.

"According to late reports from different parts of the country," stated a local newspaper later in the day, "the strange messenger is a real airship, operated by some of its inventors, who are simply making a trial trip and who have already made applications for patents. The principle on which it is constructed is that of the parallel plane and it is operated by steam."

Several residents of Bay City saw what at first resembled a "flying cloud" as they walked home at 12.30 a.m. from a lodge meeting. When the object got closer, it revealed itself as a material construction passing through an overcast sky. Flying slowly over Center Street, it seemed not more than 50 feet high. There was a red light at each end, and the craft itself shone with a dull red glow, as if there were lights on the other side. Conical in shape, it was from 50 to 75 feet in length, perhaps one-third that in width. The observers could see nothing that offered a clue to the object's method of propulsion.

The ship crossed into nearby Essexville and then seemed to land. No one ventured out to see if it had.

### Sky-"swimmer" ?

Mount Vernon, Illinois, recorded what must surely rank as one of the weirdest reports of the 1897 period. The *Saginaw Courier-Herald* recounted the bare details



(our italics): "What is thought to have been the mysterious airship was seen [at Mount Vernon] by more than a hundred persons. It was first observed about 8.30 o'clock and continued in sight for half an hour. Mayor Wells, who had an excellent view of the mysterious visitor from the observatory attached to his residence, says it resembled *the body of a huge man swimming through the air with an electric light at his back.*"†

Airships appeared at Pittsford, Clayton, and Ann Arbor (all in Michigan) the same evening. At Cadmus, one excitable soul shot at the object, thinking it was a flying dragon.

Three night men employed by the Wallin Leather Company in Grand Rapids reported seeing a bright white light in the western sky. They watched it at intervals over a three-and-a-half hour period, until it disappeared in the north at 3 a.m. on the 17th.

#### An 1897 "message"

Later in the morning, at 6.15, on his way to work, Mr. C. T. Smith stumbled upon something on the sidewalk. Upon examination it proved to be an envelope on which someone had written "From the Airship Travellers." Inside was a letter, "written," related a news story, "on note paper with a purple indellible [sic] pencil, . . . attached to a piece of stiff wire about five inches long, at the other end of which was fastened, as a weight, one of the iron combination stoppers and bottle openers commonly used to open beer bottles."

The message read:

To whoever finds this. 2,500 feet above the level of the sea, headed north at this writing, testing the airship. afraid we are lost. we are unable to control our engine. please notify our people. think we are somewhere over Michigan.

Arthur B. Coats, Laurel, Miss.  
C. C. Harris, Gulport, Miss.  
C. W. Rich, Richburg, Miss.

April 16th, '97. 9 p.m.

An unidentified flying object flew over Three Rivers that night.

In another incident involving airships and railroads, persons at Grant Station in Bailey reported watching a

huge object, about 200 feet in length, flying above the northbound evening train. The phenomenon seemed to be about a mile above the earth.

The next afternoon, a strange explosion rocked the village of Saline. Upon hearing the sound, workers just north of town had their attention attracted to a large dark object moving rapidly westward against a strong wind.

Between 8 and 9 p.m. an airship passed over Saginaw at a fast rate of speed, heading in a northerly direction. At Manistique, citizens viewed the craft travelling westward. C. R. Orr, a witness, estimated its speed at 1,000 m.p.h.—which certainly sounds extravagant, considering the relatively slow speeds other observers in other cases had reported. At any rate, the construction resembled, the Sault Ste. Marie News said, "a Washington cigar with a bright light in the centre of it."

Shortly after midnight, a railroad fireman named Widosky left the village of Wakefield and began walking back to his home in Thomaston. He happened to be looking down as he stepped over a mud puddle—and there he saw reflected the swaying lights of something above him. Glancing upward, he caught sight of three lights—red, green, and white—soaring across the sky with an odd undulating motion. The next morning, when he told friends, they laughingly suggested he had taken his first drink. (Mr. Widosky did not indulge.) To back up his story, he saw to it that the next night he had six potential witnesses with him, and, just after midnight, they all observed lights identical to those Widosky had seen 24 hours earlier.

An airship with a light at each end flew over Jackson on the evening of the 21st. The following night, at 11, two men of Hemlock watched an aircraft sailing southward "at a fearful rate of speed."

[This article will be concluded in our next issue]

#### NOTE

† "I'd like to know what Mr. W. H. Smith saw, Sept. 18, 1877, in the sky, moving over the city of Brooklyn. It looked like a winged human form" (New York Sun, Sept. 21, 1877)." Charles Fort, Lo? Ch. 12.

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## THE HUMANOIDS

Demand for the FSR special October 1966 publication on landings of UFOs and reports of alleged occupants is now so great that our second reprint is selling rapidly.

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FSR 14-G

assuredly be reported as UFOs. Many of them must be hidden away in our files unrecognised. Where are all these UFO reports?

### Theories

There have been many theories to explain ball lightning, but only two stand up to examination. One involves chemical combustion, the other a direct current electrical discharge. The first supposes that a very low concentration of an inflammable gas is in the air, when a lightning discharge ignites it: little balls of flame form and dart about. This theory is inelegant, but it has been demonstrated in the laboratory. The second theory supposes that a highly charged thundercloud has not yet reached the point where it can produce the usual lightning flash. If, beneath it, there is a localised patch of air that is electrically different from the rest, then the

"FLYING SAUCER REVIEW", LONDON, VOL. 15, N<sup>o</sup> 1, JAN. - FEB. 1. 1969

## THE 1897 STORY Part 3

Jerome Clark and Lucius Farish



ON April 23, 1897, on a farm in Burton township near Flint, Daniel Gray heard a rumbling, whizzing sound over his head. For a few seconds he could see a dark object flashing away, and then, even before he was able to regain his composure, something fell from the sky and thudded into the ground near him. When he picked it up, he found that it was a Toronto, Canada, newspaper dated October 5, 1896, dry and in almost perfect condition.

An airship was observed at Omer on the 24th, and on the same date the South Haven *Sentinel* noted, "So many people have seen the noted airship that has been flitting for the last two weeks back and forth over South Haven, it would take much space to give all their names."

### Cigar-shaped objects

Two residents of Freeland, Leonard and Henry Krause, viewed an unknown object on the evening of the 25th. At Sidaw, a resident related his experience of the 26th to the *Marquette Mining Journal*: "I was taking a short walk before retiring for the night. As a rule, I am a person who retires early, but this night I happened to be out late. It was about 11 o'clock.

"I happened to cast my eyes upward, and to my astonishment I saw three large lights, red, green and white. When I first noticed the strange object, it seemed to be over Booth's mill, and was sailing in a south-easterly direction. It was going, perhaps, sixty miles an hour. I was near the Nester estate warehouse at the time, and before I could get anyone else to the site, the ship had disappeared from view.

"It was a bright night and I could plainly discern a cigar-shaped object and a basket below, somewhat resembling a street car. I should judge it was about 2,000 feet from the ground."

Two Dayton people, returning home at 2 a.m. from staying up with a sick neighbour, were startled by the

electrical lines of force may preferentially pass through there and cause a localised breakdown of the air. A corona discharge may form in this region—something less than a full-scale spark, but rather similar in principle to a Neon sign. Going into the theory in detail and solving the mathematical equations predicts spherical or ellipsoidal shapes, with characteristics very like those actually observed. The beauty of this theory is that it can account satisfactorily for all the well-established properties of the phenomenon, and can probably be modified slightly if necessary.

Understanding of ball lightning has progressed a long way even since Maxwell Cade wrote about it in these pages. It is beginning to become possible to distinguish several different categories of the phenomenon. It would be a triumph if UFO research could contribute something to a further understanding of ball lightning.

appearance of a huge cigar with a lighted basket under it. In the light could be seen the forms of three human-looking occupants.

### Occupants, music and a grappling hook!

Occupants also figure in a Holton story. On the night of the 29th, at 11.30, a huge lighted object came out of the north and slowed down, finally hovering over the bridge. People streamed out into the street to hear the sounds of revellers aboard the ship. Loud talk and music, "the like of which never was heard in this place," could be heard all during the craft's 55-minute appearance. The phenomenon itself measured 300ft., plus a 40ft. tail; in width and depth, about 90ft.

Just as the tail started to whirl, the beings dropped a grappling hook which caught one of the viewers on the ground. Then the ship flew away. The captured man returned from White Cloud the next day "and has been talking ever since about aerial navigation."

"Mysterious lights have been seen on Long Lake during the past week," the Grand Traverse *Herald* a bit enigmatically informed its readers.

And on May 1 the Saginaw *Evening News* related that a shoe of huge proportions, discovered on the railroad track near O'Donnell, Spencer & Co.'s plant, may have fallen from the airship.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hints of a whole new dimension to the airship enigma, suggesting that it may have been a world-wide phenomenon rather than solely an American, have been furnished by aviation historian Dale M. Titler. The original manuscript of his *Wings of Mystery* serves as the source for the information which follows.

On July 11, 1897, Swedish aeronaut Salomon Auguste Andree, together with a crew of two, attempted to pilot a balloon from Spitzbergen across the North Pole to a mainland on the other side. In the wake of great public

interest in the venture, a number of sightings of a balloon-like object, believed to be one of Andree's, were made—but it later developed that Andree's balloon had been in none of the areas reporting sightings.

On July 17, a woman in a small Swedish town saw a balloon with drag ropes and a net. She said there was a man in the gondola.

The crew of the steamer *Kong Halfdan*, off Norway between Raugesund and Ryvarden on August 13, sighted a "big balloon" which passed so close that its drag ropes could be seen.

#### Siberian sighting

At Antsiferona, Siberia, on September 17, observers watched a "round object" for five minutes as it headed northwest.

"The night of September 26th, at half past two in the morning," wrote a Russian engineer, "I observed a balloon drifting rapidly southeast over the town of Yakovlevskaya. . . . The balloon had an electric (phosphorescent) sheen. It was visible for less than three minutes, disappearing rapidly over the horizon."

As Titler comments, "An *electric sheen*? *Rapidly disappearing*? Surely this wasn't Andree's balloon. But what other aerial craft could the engineer have described?"

What other aerial craft, indeed?

Some time during the summer (the date is not furnished) an Indian youth near Winnipeg, Canada, saw "an object resembling a balloon giving out a considerable amount of light. . . ." In August a woman and her daughter in Caribou, British Columbia, sighted a round object moving from west to east. As it approached, it grew larger and sank lower in the sky. Then the witnesses saw two shapes, one above the other, and the object shot upward over Quesnelle Lake and disappeared from sight.

"None of these last three objects could have been balloons—much less Andree's," Titler concludes. "They were something else."

#### [Comment

1. With specific reference to the American 1897 reports, a word of caution is necessary. Two of the stories are rather suspect, we fear, and before they find a place in the literature of ufology, we feel that we had better outline our reasons for entertaining doubts about them.

First, the Reynolds, Michigan, landing of April 14. Our source is the *Saginaw Courier-Herald* for April 17, but the incident is also described in the *Lansing State Republican* for the same date; only the latter paper gives the date as the 17th (rather than as the 14th) and the location as Williamston. Otherwise, the account is the same, word for word, except where the *Herald* mentions "lots of people . . . from Morley and Howard City," the *Republican* refers to the same "from Okemos and Locke."

All of which leads one to suspect a journalistic hoax something like the Aurora, Texas, fiasco. It may be, however, that an irresponsible editor of the *Republican* got the story and gave it a more local base, changing the date to add to the sensation.

Nonetheless, we must be careful in studying the

report for another reason; the description of the occupant certainly does not tally with those supplied in other accounts of the time. The 1897 ufonauts were quite human-like in appearance and size, and so a "monster" story will naturally be viewed with suspicion.

We do not necessarily urge rejection of the story, only very cautious consideration of it.

Secondly, one cannot help wondering if the Holton "merry-makers" of the 29th were some sort of newspaper joke. The story, which appeared in the April 30 *Muskegon Daily Chronicle*, is written in so trivial a manner that it tempts one to classify it with the many other satirical pieces that the airship inspired in contemporary newspapers. Notice, for example, how the writer treats the abduction of a Holton citizen: "But just as [the airship] began to move, a grappling hook was let down and caught one of our most truthful citizens who was instantly hoisted on board and carried away. The truthful citizen came back on the 11.30 train from White Cloud and has been talking ever since about aerial navigation."

Perhaps the reporter heard the story second-hand and simply could not take it seriously. Or perhaps he invented the "abduction" to poke fun at Robert Hibbard's claim (which received wide publicity and with which he could well have been familiar) and the alleged gullibility of airship witnesses and believers.

But we have included the account among the serious reports because of similar testimony about loud noises and music emanating from airships.

2. Since we began digging up some of the 1897 data, we have noted with satisfaction a growing interest in the period. One individual to whom UFO researchers owe a debt of gratitude is Mr. Gary Larreategui, who is responsible for bringing our attention to most of the material we have used in this article. Mr. Larreategui, showing dedication that unfortunately very few ufologists possess, has spent many hours carefully researching the newspapers of his native Michigan, providing us with some of the most revealing accounts yet.

Donald Hanlon, an associate of Jacques Vallée, is in the early stages of putting together a comprehensive study, tentatively titled *Enigma of the Airship*, based upon his own collection of approximately 200 reports. Another American writer, author of a valuable reference work on UFOs, is considering a new book which will use 1897 data. And by the time this article appears in print, Gordon Lore and Harold Deneault's long-awaited volume on the historical sightings, including 1897, should be available. In the meantime ufologists like Charles F. Flood and Ted Bloecher continue quietly to amass information.

Some of us have even begun to expand our efforts to include the 1896 California and 1909-10 Eastern U.S.A. wave, finding material too long ignored. Still, we have barely begun, and there is much, much more to do.

One thing that would greatly facilitate our work, of course, would be the discovery of research contemporary to 1897. John Keel suggested in a personal conversation with Jerome Clark that some enterprising turn-of-the-century journalist may have done a book on the airship scare. If we could locate it somehow, we could be taken

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2

a giant step forward.

For many reasons 1897 is vital to our comprehension of the great UFO riddle. Therefore, we strongly urge readers of the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW to join us in our undertaking. Interested North Americans should study newspaper files of late March, all of April, and early May 1897. West Coast researchers should check the papers of November and December 1896, with spot checks into months before and after.

There is cause to believe as well that 1880, 1883 (in fact the whole 1877-87 period, termed by the late M. K. Jessup "the incredible decade"), 1907-10, and 1913 have something to offer American and Canadian investigators.

Residents of the British Isles might check out the airship flap of 1909, which Fort describes briefly in *Lo!* Ufologists in middle Europe, especially Germany, should study the newspapers and magazines of the late 1850's, and Frenchmen should find the 1860's fertile territory. South Africans should concentrate on 1914.

One last suggestion: Perhaps a Canadian ufologist could go through the Toronto papers of October 5, 1896, to see if there is anything in them of conceivable relevance to our subject. By dropping this specific issue at Dan Gray's feet, the ufonauts may have been trying to tell us something.

*Flying Objects*, related how the March 1950 issue of *True* magazine carried an article called "How Scientists tracked Flying Saucers", written by Commander McLaughlin himself.

"I am convinced," McLaughlin wrote, "that it was a flying saucer, and further, that these discs are spaceships from another world, operated by animate, intelligent beings."

For some extraordinary reason his story had been given full clearance by the military, but according to Ruppelt the material in the article was in direct contradiction to all releases made by them during the previous two years. This is another example of the confusion and conflicting views foisted on the public. Hot news and then cold douches repeated alternately all the time.

The impact of the Commander's article in *True* magazine was formidable and many people were convinced that if scientists were seeing UFOs then there was something very real from outer space watching our planet.

The sequel was that Commander McLaughlin suddenly found himself posted from White Sands to the destroyer *Bristol*. Possibly the United States Navy prefers its regular officers to maintain silence over some matters in the same way that our Royal Navy is traditionally known as the silent service.

SOURCES

*The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* by Edward J. Ruppelt (Doubleday) 1956.  
*with about Flying Saucers* by Aimé Michel (Criterion Books)

## 20 YEARS BACK

Brinsley le Poer Trench 1949

THE year 1949 was not a vintage one as regards the number of reported sightings. However, two notable incidents occurred and the first of these took place on April 24.

At that time Commander R. B. McLaughlin, a regular Naval officer, was in charge of a team of scientists at White Sands Testing Ground, New Mexico. Actually, during 1948 and 1949 McLaughlin and his team made several UFO sightings, but the April 24, 1949, one is generally considered to be the best one.

At about 10.30 a.m. Commander McLaughlin's team were preparing to send up one of the giant 100-foot diameter Naval Skyhook balloons. The sky was crystal clear. They had already sent aloft a weather balloon to check lower altitude winds. Some of the team under Charles B. Moore, Jr., were busy tracking this balloon at about 10,000ft. when suddenly one man shouted and drew their attention to another object much higher and away to the left of the balloon.

To their astonishment the team of scientists saw an elliptical-shaped UFO which was whitish-silver in colour. One of them swung the theodolite being used to track the weather balloon round on to the UFO and tracked it for a whole minute. The unknown object finally climbed away very fast and was lost to sight in a matter of seconds.

Subsequently, the scientists estimated that the UFO had been at a height of 56 miles when first spotted and travelling at 7 miles per second, that is at 17,000 miles per hour!

The late Edward J. Ruppelt, former head of Project Blue Book, in his book *The Report on Unidentified*

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# Mystery Airships of the 1800's



PART ONE: "No form of dirigible or heavier-than-air machine was flying — or could fly — at this time." And yet . . .

By Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman

MARCH 26, 1880, was a quiet Friday night in tiny Galisteo Junction, N. Mex. (now the town of Lamy). The train from nearby Santa Fe had come and gone and the railroad agent, his day's work finished, routinely locked up the depot and set out with a couple of friends for a short walk.

Suddenly they heard voices which seemed to be coming from the sky. The men looked up to see an object, "monstrous in size," rapidly approaching from the west, flying so low that elegantly-drawn characters could be discerned on the outside of the peculiar vehicle. Inside, the

occupants, who numbered 10 or so and looked like ordinary human beings, were laughing and shouting in an unfamiliar language and the men on the ground also heard music coming from the craft. The craft itself was "fish-shaped" — like a cigar with a tail — and it was driven by a huge "fan" or propeller.

As it passed overhead one of the occupants tossed some objects from the car. The depot agent and his friends recovered one item almost immediately, a beautiful flower with a slip of fine silk-like paper containing characters which reminded the men of designs they had seen on Jap-

## MYSTERY AIRSHIPS OF THE 1800's

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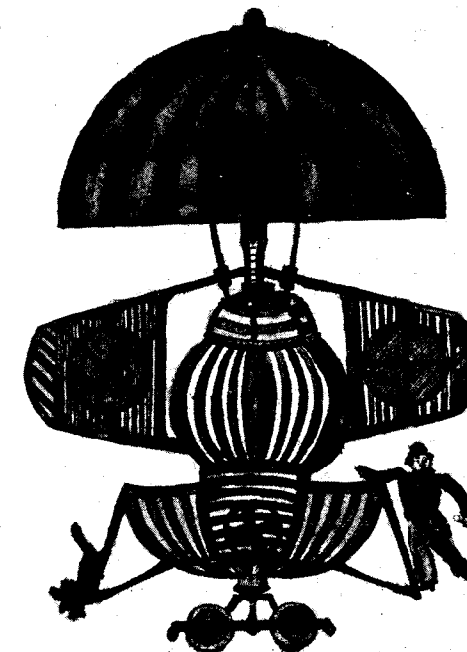
its propeller clearly indicate it was heavier than air, but such a flying machine didn't then exist according to British authority Charles H. Gibbs-Smith: "Speaking as an aeronautical historian who specializes in the periods before 1910, I can say with certainty that the only airborne vehicles, carrying passengers, which could possibly have been seen anywhere in North America . . . were free-flying spherical balloons, and it is highly unlikely for these to be mistaken for anything else. No form of dirigible (i.e., a gasbag propelled by an airscrew) or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying — or indeed *could* fly — at this time in America."

\*\*\*

NEVERTHELESS, mysterious "airships" were seen in many parts of the world in the last half of the 19th Century and the early years of the 20th. And plans for the construction of such craft were not unknown.

In 1848 gold fever seized America. On January 24 a workman discovered the precious metal in Sutter's millrace in California's Sacramento Valley. Within weeks the entire Pacific coast knew about it and a few months later "gold" was on the tongue of every easterner who ever dreamed of easy fortune.

Getting to those goldfields, how-



Dellschau alleged bizarre aircraft actually were test-flown in 1860's.

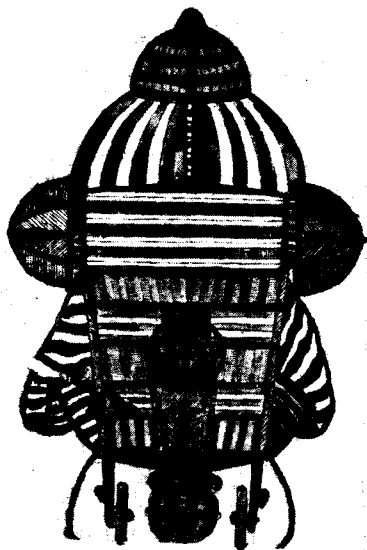
ever, was a problem, for the inland parts of the young nation were largely unsettled. A unique solution — air travel — came from "R. Porter & Company," a firm which listed its address as Room 40 of the Sun Building in New York City. In the latter part of 1848 the company distributed an advertising flyer in the eastern United States which promised more than it ever delivered.

Touting "THE BEST ROUTE TO THE CALIFORNIA GOLD!" the flyer read

anese chests which held tea.

Soon thereafter the aerial machine ascended and sailed away toward the east at high speed.

The next morning searchers found a cup—one of the items the witnesses had seen thrown



Dellschau scrapbooks contained great variety of peculiar airship drawings.

out of the craft but had been unable to locate in the darkness.

"It is of very peculiar workmanship," the *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican* reported, "entirely different to anything used in this country."

The depot agent took the cup and the flower and put them on display. Before the day was

over, however, this physical evidence of the passage of the early unidentified object had vanished. In the evening a mysterious gentleman identified only as a "collector of curiosities" appeared in town, examined the finds, suggested they were Asiatic in origin and offered such a large sum of money for them that the agent had no choice but to accept. The "collector" scooped up his purchases and never was seen again.

Of course the story of aviation does not begin on December 17, 1903, the date of Orville Wright's 12-second aerial hop at Kitty Hawk. Long before that scientists and inventors had struggled to unlock the secrets of powered flight and to build what an 1897 issue of *Scientific American* called the "true flying machine; that is, one which is hundreds of times heavier than the air upon which it rests, (and flies) by reason of its dynamic impact, and not by the aid of any balloon or gasbag whatsoever."

But nothing in the early history of flight tells us what a huge airborne cigar was doing over New Mexico in 1880, especially as it "appeared to be entirely under the control of the occupants and . . . guided by a large fan-like apparatus," and also could ascend with startling speed. Its "monstrous size" and

in part that the company was "making active progress in the construction of an 'Aerial Transport' for the express purpose of carrying passengers between New York and California.

"It is expected to put this machine in operation about the first of April, 1849, and the transport is expected to make a trip to the gold region and back in seven days. . . ."

On the flyer the "aerial locomotive" is illustrated—a huge cigar-shaped device, identified as a "gasbag," with a tail. Under it, attached with "sturdy material arrows can't puncture," is a similarly-shaped car with windows in its midsection. "Snug gondola with benches for 50 or more passengers," the caption reads. From the top of the gondola stretches a long pipe which is identified as "a steam engine for controlled propulsion through sunny skies at 60 miles the hour."

Except for this pipe, entrepreneur Porter's vessel is almost a dead ringer for the type of "UFO" widely reported in the late 1800's and early 1900's which came to be called "the airship," although obviously there had to be more than one of them and they did not all look alike. But in the advertisement of an obscure company lie the first hints of a bizarre mystery which is stag-

gering in its implications.\*

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**D**URING THE 1850's mysterious "airships" regularly crossed the skies of Germany and just before that, probably in the year 1848, an enigmatic young German named C. A. A. Dellschau immigrated to the United States. Dellschau's own testimony places him in Sonora, a California mining town, in the 1850's. Where he might have been in the decades after that is unknown. We do know, however, that about the turn of the century he married a widow and took up residence in Houston, Tex., where he lived in virtual seclusion. He had no friends; by all accounts his quarrelsome disposition kept everyone at a distance. Dismissed as an eccentric by the few who knew him, Dellschau devoted hours to the compilation of a series of scrapbooks filled with clippings, drawings and cryptic notations. He died in 1924 at the age of 92.

Were it not for a chance discovery many years later Dellschau's life would have gone unnoticed. But one day in May 1969 a UFOlogist named P. G. Navarro happened to stroll past an

\*We do not pretend to "solve" this mystery. What we offer instead are possibilities suggested by a wide range of often conflicting evidence complicated by the distance in time separating us from the events described (which makes firsthand investigation impossible in all but rare instances).

aviation exhibit at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. Two large scrapbooks (Dellschau's) caught his eye and he stopped to take a closer look.\*

He found that the scrapbooks contained old news stories and articles about attempts of various inventors to construct heavier-than-air flying machines. But these were not nearly so interesting as Dellschau's drawings of strange-looking, cumbersome vessels which he claimed *actually had been flown at one time.*

Navarro, his curiosity aroused, sought more of the scrapbooks and over a period of time acquired 10 more—from such places as a junk shop in Houston and from a woman art collector who had been interested in Dellschau's strange drawings. Navarro even talked with Dellschau's stepdaughter, then an old woman. Finally he set out to make sense of Dellschau's notes which had been penned in English, German and code. When he had finished he had reconstructed an incredible story.

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From the notes Navarro learned that in the 1850's Dellschau and a group of associates, about 60 in all, gathered in Sonora, Calif., where they formed an "Aero Club" and constructed and flew heavier-than-air vehicles. They worked in an open field near Columbia, a small town near Sonora. (Today an airstrip covers the field, the only area in the predominantly hilly region where planes can take off and land safely.)

The club worked in secrecy and its members were not permitted to talk about their activities or to use the aircraft for their own purposes. One member who threatened to take his machine to the public in the hope of making a fortune died in an

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The *San Francisco Call* established that "Benjamin," a native of Carmel, Me., had been seen in the Orville area visiting a wealthy uncle and confiding to friends that he had invented something which would "revolutionize the world."

Several days into the controversy, the inventor dispensed with the services of lawyer Collins because he was talking too much. W. H. H. Hart, a former state attorney general and a highly respected man, took over Collins' job. In subsequent newspaper interviews Hart revealed that two airships existed, one in the east and the other in California. "I have been concerned in the eastern invention for some time personally," he said. "The idea is to consolidate both interests."

The western craft would be used as a weapon of war. "From what I have seen of it," Hart said, "I have not the least doubt that it will carry four men and

1,000 pounds of dynamite. I am quite convinced that two or three men could destroy the city of Havana in 48 hours."

Hart thus represented both airship inventors, one in California and one in New Jersey. The former had Hart say, "... if the Cubans would give him \$10 million he would wipe out the Spanish stronghold." This was not the last time airships and Cuba\* would be mentioned in the same breath, as we shall see.

Early in December 1896 a stranger appeared at a business establishment in Fresno, Calif., and inquired for a George Jennings. Covered with dust, the man looked as if he had traveled a long distance. When Jennings stepped out of a back room he greeted the visitor like an old friend. The two men engaged in whispered conversation and the persons standing nearby were nonplussed to overhear the word "airship" spoken more than once.

Later Jennings talked freely to a reporter for the *Fresno Semi-Weekly Expositor*, balking only at giving his friend's name.

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The next afternoon an airship passed over Oak Park, Calif., leaving a trail of smoke and soon San Francisco, Oakland and other cities and towns in the north-central part of California had their own stories in all the newspapers.

Several persons now stepped forward to tell of earlier sightings. One was a fruit rancher near Bowman, Placer County, who said he and members of his family had watched an airship fly by at 100 miles an hour in late October. Even more remarkable was the statement of a man who claimed that in August he and fellow hunters had tracked a wounded deer across Tamalpais Mountain until they came to a clearing where six men were working on an airship.

The most baffling part of the whole flap, which lasted well into December 1896, was the role of "E. H. Benjamin," a dentist whose name the newspapers always enclosed in quotation marks, as if they had reason to doubt his identity. It was either Benjamin or his uncle who that November approached George D. Collins, a San Francisco lawyer, and asked him to represent his interests in the patenting of an airship. He told the incredulous Collins that he had come from Maine to California seven years before in order to

conduct his experiments without danger of interruption.

Collins told reporters that his wealthy client (whom he never identified) did his work near Oroville where Collins himself had viewed the invention — an enormous construction 150 feet long. "It is built on the aeroplane system and has two canvas wings 18 feet wide and rudder shaped like a bird's tail," the attorney said. "I saw the thing ascend about 90 feet under perfect control."

On November 17, Collins went on, the airship had flown the 60 miles between Oroville and Sacramento in 45 minutes. This was not the first flight the inventor had made. For two weeks he had been flying in attempts to perfect the craft's navigational apparatus.

This led to the story in the *Sacramento Bee* for November 23, datelined Oroville: "The rumor that the airship which is alleged to have passed over Sacramento was constructed near this town seems to have a grain of truth in it. The parties who could give information if they would are extremely reticent. They give evasive answers or assert they know absolutely nothing about it.

"Not a single person that saw or knew of an airship being constructed near here can be found

where I do not know myself. It is also true that the man who was in here a short time ago is one of the inventors. He told me the trip to this country was involuntary upon the part of the men in the airship. In other words the machine came itself and they couldn't stop it. (I was told) that they were flying, as usual, around Contra Costa County hills and rose to a height of about 1,000 feet. Suddenly the airship struck a current of air and refused to answer to its steering gear. It was borne rapidly southward against all efforts to change its course until suddenly the current of air seemed to lessen and the machine once more became manageable. The men aboard at once descended and flew about looking for a hiding place, which they at length found."

Jennings said he was sure that individuals in nearby Watertown and Selma must have observed the craft as it limped through the county in search of a "hiding place." Sure enough, the day be-

fore his encounter with the aeronaut, the *San Francisco Call* had published a letter from five Watertown men who said they had seen an enormous airship nearly collide with a cornice on the city's post office building the evening of November 20. The craft had an "intensely brilliant" light and the witnesses could see human forms aboard.

The evening of December 5 Selma citizens were treated to the unnerving spectacle of a low-flying brilliantly-illuminated object sailing rapidly toward the southeast.

"The character of the witnesses is such as to leave no doubt that they saw just what they described," the *Selma Irrigator* editorialized.

After the first week of December the airships seemed to have disappeared, the "inventors" were heard from no more and everything returned to normal — but not for long. The incredible part was yet to come.

(This is Part I of a three-part series.)



#### FROM POPCORN TO GINSENG

A POOR POPCORN vendor of Chonan, South Korea, claimed that a mountain god came to him in a dream in October 1969 and directed him to a strange mountain slope several miles away. There he discovered 10 herbaceous plants which turned out to be genuine wild ginseng. Experts have valued his find — which is treasured as an elixir of life — at \$2,146.00.

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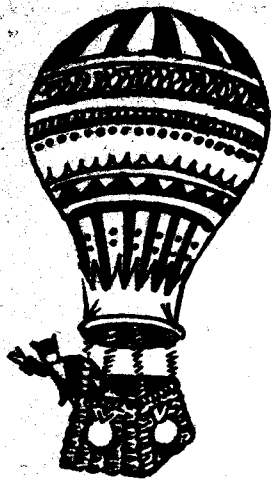
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FATE, JUNE 1973



PART TWO

The existence of the craft is beyond doubt but what powered them? Who were the members of the secret "Aero Club"?

# Mystery Airships of the 1800's

By Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman

THE AIRSHIP as a practical invention is believed to be so nearly ripe that a story of its appearance in the sky is not necessarily to be received with disrespect," *Harper's Weekly* commented in its April 24, 1897, issue . . . not unless you assumed that thousands of Americans had lost their senses, a discomfoting notion which some scientists, editors and skeptics seemed to embrace. Prof. George Hough, a Northwestern University astronomer, assured everyone that the "airship" was nothing but the star Alpha Orionis as perceived by drunks, fools and hysterics. Most newspapers ridiculed reports of the airship, finally desisting only for fear of offending the growing numbers

of readers who had seen the craft.

California's airship, reported in November 1896, was the first to receive widespread publicity but that same month an unidentified flying object passed through central Nebraska and sightings in the state continued until the following May. Delaware farmers saw airships as early as January 1897.

It took a sighting in Omaha involving hundreds of witnesses to put the airships back in the headlines, however. The low-flying object, a large bright light, "too big for a balloon," appeared on the night of March 29, 1897, and was visible for more than half an hour.

From then on America's skies

**The Call**  
 SAN FRANCISCO, SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 22, 1896—TWENTY-EIGHT PAGES.

**SAW THE MYSTIC FLYING LIGHT**

Oaklanders Who Believe an Airship Hovered Over Them.

Say That They Saw a Dark Body Above the Gleam.

It Was Headed for San Francisco and Seemed About to Come to Earth.

OAKLAND OFFICE SAN FRANCISCO CALL, 202 Broadway, Nov. 21.

were filled with airships. The reports came primarily from mid-western states and descriptions of the ships varied — as these random examples show:

Everest, Kans., April 1 (*Kansas City Times*): "The basket or car seemed to be 25 to 30 feet long, shaped like an Indian canoe. Four light wings extended from the car; two wings were triangular. A large dark hulk

was discernible immediately above the car and was generally supposed by the watchers to be an inflated gasbag."

Chicago, April 11 (*Chicago Times-Herald*): "The lower portion of the airship was thin and made of some light white metal like aluminum. The upper portion was dark and long like a big cigar, pointed in front and with some kind of arrangement in the

rear to which cables are attached."

Texas, April 16 (*New York Sun*): "... shaped like a Mexican cigar, large in the middle and small at both ends, with great wings resembling those of an enormous butterfly. It was brilliantly illuminated by the rays of two great searchlights and was sailing in a southeasterly direction with the velocity of wind, presenting a magnificent appearance."

Numerous persons reported seeing normal-looking men and women inside the ships. One of the most interesting "occupant" reports came from M. G. Sisson, postmaster at Greenfield, Ill. On the afternoon of April 19, 1897, while walking his dog through the woods he spotted an airship 150 feet above him — a phenomenon he found less unsettling than the sight of a woman standing on a deck on the bow of the craft netting pigeons. When she saw Sisson she quickly stepped inside and the craft flew off.

Later that day Thomas Bradburg of Hagaman, about nine miles east of Greenfield, found part of a letter supposedly dropped from the airship. On a printed letterhead of "Airship Co., Oakland, Calif." it read:

"We are having a delightful time and plenty to eat. Mollie's scheme for running down birds

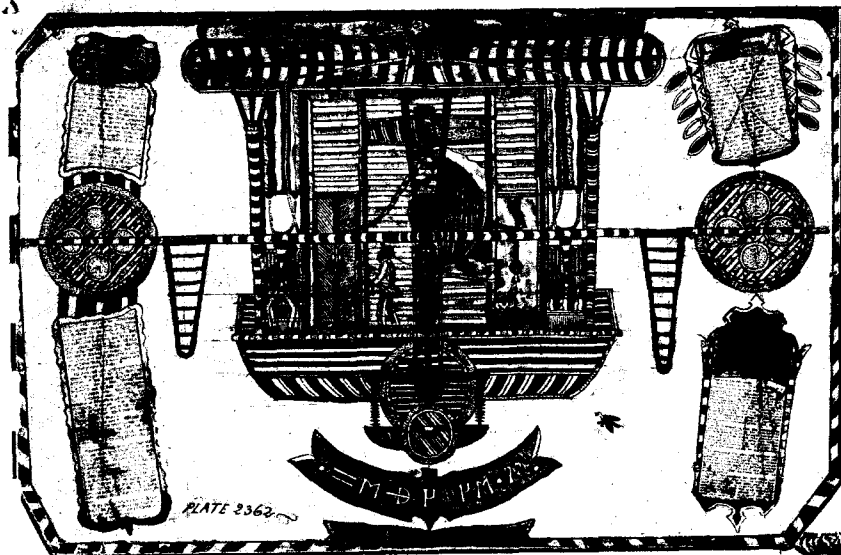
and catching them with a net works excellently; we feast daily upon pigeon pie.

"Since starting out we have greatly increased the velocity of the ship. The following figures will give some idea of the speed which we are now able to make: St. Louis, April 15, 8:30 P.M.; Chicago, same evening, 9:33; Kansas City, one hour and 4 minutes later."

Purportedly many such "messages" were released from air ships and no doubt the majority were hoaxes. We mention the letter found by Bradburg because of its possible tie-in with Sisson's experience (whether Bradburg had heard Sisson's story before he "found" the letter is unanswerable) and because "Oakland, Calif." on the letterhead takes us back to the controversies of November 1896 as to the inventor's place of residence discussed in Part I of this article.

\* \* \*

THE EVENTS of 1896, incredible as they were, are relatively uncomplicated compared to what happened in 1897. California's controversy concerned only one alleged inventor, the mysterious "E. H. Benjamin," but April 1897 produced an onslaught of conflicting claims involving a host of people — stories which made it obvious that some



Drawings like this one from Dellschau's scrapbook reportedly were found also in John O. Preast's home in Nebraska, earning him title of "airship inventor."

one was lying. Sometimes it was he "witnesses," sometimes the newspapers and sometimes it may have been the airship occupants themselves.

Let us examine several "contact" claims of this period:

**Springfield, Ill., April 15:** Farmhands Adolph Winkle and John Hulle allegedly saw an airship land two miles outside the city and talked with its occupants, two men and a woman, who said they would "make a report to the government when Cuba\* is declared free."

**Harrisburg, Ark., April 21:** At 1:00 A.M. a strange noise

awakened a man identified as ex-Senator Harris and through his bedroom window he saw an airship descending to the ground. The occupants, two young men, a woman and an elderly man with a dark waist-length beard, got out and helped themselves to a supply of fresh well water. Overcome by curiosity, Harris went outside and engaged the old man in a long conversation, during which the latter claimed he had inherited the secret of antigravity from his

\*As we pointed out last month this period (1895-1897) spawned the Spanish-American War, over the issue of Cuban independence.

talked with the three for a while, saying they subsisted on birds which they would overtake and capture in flight. Before leaving the aeronauts offered any one of them a free ride and ended up taking James Davis to Huntington, 15 miles away.

This story appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in the form of a letter from two Jenny Lind residents, who urged the paper to contact R. M. McDowell, general manager of the Western Coal and Mining Company in St. Louis. McDowell told the *Post-Dispatch*, "Yes, I know all those persons. I have extensive works at Jenny Lind. I don't understand the letter, though. It is very strange."

**Hot Springs, Ark., May 6:** John J. Sumpter, Jr., and John McLemore, police officers testified in an affidavit that they had seen a 60-foot airship land that dark, rainy night. There were three occupants, a young man and a woman and an older man with a long dark beard. The latter approached the lawmen carrying a lantern while the young man pulled a large sack with water and the woman stayed in the shadows, apparently hoping to remain unobserved. The old man said they would stop off at Nashville after traveling the country. The officers turned down an offer for a ride and then left on other

business. When they returned 40 minutes later the ship was gone.

The *Fort Smith Daily News Record* noted that while Sumpter and McLemore were subjected to a great deal of ridicule "they, however, most seriously maintain that it is absolutely true, and their earnestness is puzzling many, who, while unable to accept the story as a fact, yet see that the men are not jesting."

Are these stories to be taken seriously? If they are hoaxes, at least they are not so obvious as many of the tales that circulated during the three months of the 1897 airship scare. And the incidents detailed above have a certain consistency. Three of them note the presence of a lone young woman with one or two young men; two of them describe one airship occupant as an elderly man sporting a long dark beard.

In two others the occupants give Sacramento and San Francisco as the points of origin of their flights and another mentions New York. These cities figure prominently in the November-December 1896 controversies as locations either where the craft were seen or where they were constructed. And the business of the birds in the Jenny Lind report is reminiscent of M. G. Sisson's Greenfield, Ill., sighting.

Even if every one of the stories

late uncle. "Weight is no object to me," he said. "I suspend all gravity by placing a small wire around an object.

"I was making preparations to go over to Cuba and kill off the Spanish army if hostilities had not ceased," he went on, "but now my plans are changed and I may go to the aid of the Armenians." He would accomplish all this with a gun which would fire, he said "63,000 times per minute."

After offering Harris a ride, which the ex-senator refused, the crew reentered their craft and disappeared into the night.

*Stephensville, Tex., late April:* Alerted by "prominent farmer" C. L. McIlhane that an airship had alighted in a field on his farm three miles from town, a large delegation of Stephensville's leading citizens (our source lists all their names) set out to see for themselves. They found a 60-foot cigar-shaped craft and its two occupants, who gave their names as S. E. Tillman and A. E. Dolbear. The pair explained that they were making an experimental trip to test the ship for certain New York financiers. Turning down requests from onlookers who wanted to examine the craft, the aeronauts boarded the machine and sailed off.

*Conroe, Tex. April 22-23:* Around

midnight four men, one of them hotel proprietor G. L. Wither spoon, were playing dominoes in the hotel restaurant when three strangers entered. They said they had landed their airship not far away and coming into town for supper "by way of a change," then went on to report they had flown from San Francisco en route to Cuba. Wither spoon and his friends declined an offer to examine the ship, suspecting they were the victims of a practical joke. But about an hour later, after the visitors had left, a brilliantly lighted airship passed over Conroe.

*Chattanooga, Tenn., late April:* Several Chattanooga citizens reportedly encountered a landed airship "in the exact shape of a shad, minus head and tail," resting on a mountainside near the city. Its two occupants were at work repairing it. One, who identified himself as Prof. Charles Davidson, said they had left Sacramento a month before and had spent the intervening time touring the country.

*Jenny Lind, Ark., May 4:* At 7:30 P.M. an airship passed over town. Three men leaped on their bicycles and pursued it until landed near a spring next to a mountain. Its pilots, who introduced themselves as George Autzerlitz and Joseph Edler,

is no more than a figment of some prankster's imagination, the fact remains that for the most part (the lesser part we shall examine shortly) the craft were piloted and probably built by human beings — as opposed to the hairy humanoids and golden-maned Venusians of modern flying saucer folklore. But who were the airship pilots and occupants? And what happened to their marvelous inventions?

\* \* \*

WHILE 1897 newspapers printed reams of speculation about the mysterious inventor's identity, little of the material seems based on anything more substantial than rumor and hearsay. Amid all the nonsense, however, are several bits and pieces which ring true. One of these is a statement by Max L. Hosmar, secretary of the Chicago Aeronautical Association and presumably a reliable man.

Speaking the day after a sighting on April 9, 1897, Hosmar told reporters, "It was an airship. I know one of the three men who are in it. The ship is the customary inflated gas reservoir but the inventors have discovered the secret of practical propulsion. They can steer the vessel in any direction. Word reached me several weeks ago that the craft had started from San Francisco and would stop here for the pur-

pose of registration. The object of all the mystery is to arouse great interest in aerial navigation and demonstrate its practicability. The trip is to end in Washington."

Curiously enough, on the evening of April 15 an airship did appear in Washington, D.C. It reportedly approached the Washington Monument at an altitude of 600 feet, then sailed toward Georgetown and disappeared.

About 11:00 P.M. April 19 near Beaumont, Tex., a farmer and his son came upon an airship in a pasture. They found four men moving around the machine and one of them, who said his name was Wilson, asked for and received a supply of water from the farmer's well.

At Uvalde, Tex., 23 hours later Sheriff H. W. Baylor spoke briefly with the three-man crew of an airship which had alighted outside the town. One of the men gave his name as Wilson and said he was a native of Goshen, N.Y. Then he asked about a Captain Akers, whom he said he had known in Fort Worth in 1877 and understood he now lived in southern Texas. After getting water from Baylor's pump the aeronauts entered their craft and took off.

A newspaper reporter located Captain Akers who said, "I can say that while living in Fort

FATE, JULY 1973



# Mystery Airships of the 1800's

PART THREE: Technology of that time does not explain

these airships. Were extraterrestrial intelligences involved?

By Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman

AN ENTIRELY different kind of story of an airship and its occupants was published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* for April 19, 1897, in the form of a letter from W. H. Hopkins, a St. Louis resident whose job as general traveling agent for the Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Company had taken him to Missouri that week. The incident he describes had occurred, he said, on April 16:

"... I was wandering through hills east of Springfield, Mo., and coming to the brow of a hill overlooking a small clearing in the valley a short distance below me saw a sight that rooted me to

the spot... I could not believe my eyes at first... There in the clearing rested a vessel similar in outline to the airship shown in the *Post-Dispatch* a few days ago and said to have been taken in Illinois...

"Near the vessel was the most beautiful being I ever beheld. She was under medium size but of the most exquisite form and features such as would put to shame the forms as sculptured by the ancient Greeks. She was dressed in nature's garb and her golden hair, wavy and glossy, hung to her waist, unconfined except by a band of glistening jewels that bound it back from her

make it vibrate. Instantly the ball was illuminated with a soft white light which lit up the whole interior... most beautifully decorated....

"At the stern was another large ball of metal, supported in a strong framework, and connected to the shaft of the propeller at the stern was a similar mechanism attached to each propeller and smaller balls attached to a point of metal that extended from each side of the vessel and from the prow. And connected to each ball was a thin strip of metal similar to the one attached to the lamp. He struck each one and when they vibrated the balls commenced to revolve with intense rapidity and did not cease till he stopped them with a kind of brake. As they revolved intense lights, stronger than any arc light I ever saw, shone out from the points at the sides and at the prow, but they were different colors. The one at the prow was an intense white light. On the side was green and on the other red.

"The two had been examining me with the greatest curiosity in the meantime. They felt of my clothing, looked at my gray hair with surprise and examined my watch with the greatest wonder. Signs are poor medium to exchange ideas and therefore we could express but little.

"I pointed to the balls attached to the propellers. He gave each of the strips of metal a rap, those attached to the propellers under the vessel first. The balls began to revolve rapidly and I felt the vessel begin to rise... I sprang out and none too soon, for the vessel rose as lightly as a bird and shot away like an arrow... The two stood laughing and waving their hands to me, she a vision of loveliness and he of manly vigor."

Incredible? Certainly. A skeptical *Post-Dispatch* reporter took the letter to Hopkins' employer, C. C. Gardner. After reading it carefully Gardner said, "That is Mr. Hopkins' handwriting and he is now in that territory. He was also at Springfield on the day named...."

Asked if he believed Hopkins' story Gardner nodded vigorously. "Indeed I do," he said. "Strange as it seems I am compelled to believe it. Mr. Hopkins is not a romancer. He never courts notoriety. What he writes he has seen and he believes it is his duty to make the facts public. He does not drink a drop. He has been connected with this company for a long time and is most reliable. What he writes you can publish as being absolutely true."

Other employees in the firm spoke just as highly of Hopkins.

The reporter also searched out



forehead . . . She was plucking the little flowers that were just blossoming . . . with exclamations of delight in a language I could not understand. Her voice was like low, silvery bells and her laughter rang out like their chimes. In one hand she carried a fan of curious design that she fanned herself vigorously with, though to me the air was not warm and I wore an overcoat.

"In the shade of the vessel lay a man of noble proportions and majestic countenance. His hair of dark auburn fell to his shoulders in wavy masses and his full beard . . . reached to his breast. He also was fanning himself . . . as if the heat oppressed him.

"After gazing for a while I moved forward and the woman, hearing the rustle of leaves, looked around. A moment she stood looking at me with wonder and astonishment in her beautiful blue eyes, then with a shriek of fear she rushed to the man who sprang to his feet, threw his arm around her and glared at me in a threatening manner.

"I stopped and taking my handkerchief from my pocket waved it in the air. A few minutes we stood. I then spoke some words of apology for intruding but he seemed not to understand and replied in a threatening tone and words which I could not make out. I tried by signs to

make him understand and finally he left her . . . and came toward me. I extended my hand. He looked at it a moment, astonishment in his dark-brown eyes, and finally he extended his own and touched mine. I took his and carried it to my lips. I tried by signs to make them understand I meant no harm. Finally his face lighted up with pleasure and he turned and spoke to the woman. She came hesitatingly forward, her form undulating with exquisite grace. I took her hand and kissed it fervently. The color rose to her cheeks and she drew it hastily away.

"I asked them by signs where they came from but it was difficult to make them understand. Finally they seemed to do so and smiling, they gazed upwards for a moment, as if looking for some particular point, and then pointed upwards, pronouncing a word which to my imagination sounded like Mars.

"I pointed to the ship and expressed my wonder in my countenance. He took me by the hand and led me toward it. In the wall was a small door. I looked in. There was a luxurious room covered with robes of the most beautiful stuff and texture as I had never seen before. The ceiling was suspended by a gilded ball from which extended a strip of metal which he pointed

Hopkins' wife and two daughters.

"It's the truth if he wrote it," Mrs. Hopkins affirmed, "and I believe every word. Mr. Hopkins is a member of the Maple Avenue M. E. Church and has many friends . . . He undoubtedly wishes to acquaint his friends with the marvel he has seen and so uses the *Post-Dispatch* as the medium of communication.

"Mr. Hopkins left home a week ago," she continued. "Before he left he ridiculed the idea of an airship having been seen. But now I suppose he is convinced it is not a myth."

The other-worldly overtones of this incident hardly can be denied and it was not the only bizarre occurrence of the period. On the morning of April 15 a large airship moved northward slowly over Linn Grove, Iowa, and five men followed it about four miles into the country where it landed. But when the pursuers got within 700 yards of the vessel it spread out four monstrous wings and flew away. As it rose its occupants tossed out two boulders "of unknown composition."

The witnesses said the entities within the craft had the longest beards they had ever seen and a news account of the incident mentions "two queer-looking persons . . . who made desperate

efforts to conceal themselves."

The next day at Mount Vernon, Ill., the city's mayor focused his telescope on an "airship." What he saw was something that resembled, according to the *Saginaw Courier-Herald*, "the body of a huge man swimming through the air with an electric light at his back." It goes without saying that no theory which assumed terrestrial inventors were completely responsible for airship manifestations is going to account for a sighting like this one.

From the *Houston Daily Post* for April 28, 1897, comes the weirdest case of all:

"Merkel, Tex., April 26 — Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a rope attached. They followed it until crossing the railroad, it caught on a rail. Looking up they saw what they supposed was the airship. It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several windows; on bright light in front like the headlight of a locomotive. After some 10 minutes a man was seen descending the rope; he came near enough to be plainly seen. He wore a light-blue sailor suit was small in size. He stopped when he discovered parties at the anchor and cut the ropes below him and sailed off in

Worth in '76 and '77 I was well acquainted with a man by the name of Wilson from New York state and was on very friendly terms with him. He was of a mechanical turn of mind and was then working on aerial navigation and something that would astonish the world. He was a finely educated man, then about 24 years of age, and seemed to have money with which to prosecute his investigations, devoting his whole time to them. From conversations we had while in Fort Worth, I think that Mr. Wilson, having succeeded in constructing a practical airship, would probably hunt me up to show me that he was not so wild in his claims as I then supposed.

"I will say further that I have known Sheriff Baylor many years and know that any statement he may make can be relied on as exactly correct."

Another candidate for "airship inventor" is described in the *Omaha Globe-Democrat* for April 10: "The indications are that John O. Preast of this county is the author of the mysterious machine. Preast is a unique character, spending his time at his country residence near Omaha in experimenting with airships, constructing models and studying all the subjects incidental to the theories of applied mechanics along the line of providing a

vessel that will propel itself through the air. He has consumed the past 10 years in this way and the walls of his home are covered with drawings of queer-shaped things, some resembling gigantic birds, while others look like a big cigar, all of which he says represent models of airships. He is a man of superior education. He came to Omaha from Germany 20 years ago and has lived the life of a recluse. Mr. Preast refuses to admit that the ship reported in different sections of the state is his invention but . . . (it is known that) he told several persons that he would surprise the world with a working model in 1897. . . The two times in the past week that the light has been seen in Omaha it disappeared near Preast's home, hovering over the place and then appearing to go out."

The most interesting thing about this Mr. Preast is how much he reminds us of someone else — the mysterious C. A. A. Dellschau. Both men were recluses, German immigrants, compulsive students of aviation who spent untold hours making drawings of odd-looking aircraft.

And who is "Wilson"? Could he be the "Wilson" of "Tosh Wilson and Co." to whom Dellschau refers in one of his scrapbooks? A wild guess, perhaps.

northeast direction. The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliott and Miller and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people."

An ancient obscure Irish manuscript, *Speculum Regali*, records an incident that supposedly occurred in the year 956 A.D.:

"There happened in the borough of Cloera, one Sunday while people were at mass, a marvel. In this town there is a church to the memory of St. Kinarus. It befell that a metal anchor was dropped from the sky, with a rope attached to it, and one of the sharp flukes caught in the wooden arch above the church door. The people rushed out of the church and saw in the sky a ship with men on board, floating at the end of the anchor cable, and they saw a man leap overboard and pull himself down the cable to the anchor as if to unhook it. He appeared as if he were swimming in water. The folk rushed up and tried to seize him; but the bishop forbade the people to hold the man for fear it might kill him. The man was freed and hurried up the cable to the ship, where the crew cut the rope and the ship rose and sailed away out of sight. But the anchor is in the church as a testimony to this singular occurrence."

And about 1200 A.D. an anchor

plummeted out of the sky trailing a rope and got caught in a mound of stones near a church in Bristol, England. As a mob of churchgoers congregated at the scene, a "sailor" came skittering down the rope to free it. According to Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* the crowd seized the intruder and "he suffocated by the mist of our moist atmosphere and expired." His unseen comrades cut the rope and left.

We do not pretend to understand why an incident of this nature should continually recur but its occurrence in the midst of the 1897 airship flap should prove conclusively that we are dealing with phenomena whose implications boggle the mind.

Something astonishing, even incomprehensible, was taking place in 19th-Century America. Whatever conclusions we draw from it are bound to be unbelievable and little more than informed guesses, for the gaps in the story are often greater than the substance.

\* \* \*

THROUGHOUT history innumerable groups, societies and cults have organized — sometimes secretly, sometimes not — around an idea that in one way or another they were in contact with "higher beings" who taught them and oversaw their lives. Almost

Germany is involved in the airship mystery because the objects first manifested there in the 1850's. Unfortunately we do not have access to the German reports — but how odd it is that so many German names crop up in Dellschau's list of men supposedly involved with the "Aero Club" of Sonora, Calif., in the 1850's: August Schoetler, Jacob Mischer, Ernest Krause, Julius Koch, A. B. Kahn and many others.

Whatever the truth or untruth of Dellschau's jottings it seems likely that some kind of secret organization of aeronauts lived and worked in the United States and possibly Germany as well during the 19th Century. The mysterious "collector of curiosities" who showed up in Galisteo Junction, N. Mex., in 1880 the day after an airship had flown over, and stole away with the evidence it had left behind may have been associated with the organization.

It would have taken several dozen aeronauts to pilot the in-

estimable number of airships reported in different parts of the country in the 1896-97 flaps. All of them presumably would have been involved with the society and sworn to secrecy, for no one ever stepped forward to answer the many questions raised by the sudden appearances of these airships. When aeronauts did speak up much of what they said was drivel, although there may have been some strains of truth.

Nevertheless, no one got a straight answer from an aeronaut about the airship's source of power. The words "gas" and "electricity" dot a number of accounts and once "antigravity" crops up. Most airships carried both large gasbags and powerful searchlights but from eyewitness descriptions the craft seem so unwieldy that one wonders how they flew. Maybe Dellschau's antigravity gas, "NB," is as good an explanation of their propulsion as we're likely to find.

(This is Part II of a three-part series.)



#### LAWYERS JINX CLAM BOX

THE SECOND FIRE in 10 years broke out last fall in a restaurant called "The Clam Box" in Westport, Conn. Dining upstairs were the members of the Westport Bar Association who adjourned to the parking lot to finish their wine. The last time the restaurant had a fire, about nine years ago, the Westport Bar Association was also on hand.

every religion assumes its adherents were and are guided in this manner — so do cults of magicians, spiritualists, flying saucer contactees and many others. Some gifted scientists and inventors have believed privately that non-human entities helped them in their work.

In the 19th Century we believe man had neither the knowledge nor the means to build and fly heavier-than-air machines. We are equally sure that somebody was doing just that and according to most eyewitness reports, the pilots of the ships appeared to be ordinary mortals. Even if we reject Dellschau's accounts as senile raving we still must confront the "impossible" fact of the existence of airships and human occupants.

Taking Dellschau seriously for the moment we might postulate that in both Germany and the United States, specifically in California and New York, a secret cult of brilliant scientists, technicians and inventors established contact with nonhuman agencies which told them how to construct aerial vessels but ordered them to keep the work under wraps. It is safe to assume the German and American branches were in communication and about 1848 some of the Germans immigrated to pool their efforts with those of the Americans.

Perhaps 1848 was the crucial year. Perhaps the eastern branch of the society had decided to market the airship with or without the approval of their "superiors." An advertisement appeared on the east coast proclaiming that "R. Porter Company" soon would have ships for air travel. For some unknown reason nothing came of the plan but by the 1850's many of the Germans had set up shop near Sonora, Calif., with the Americans and they were to spend the next several years conducting some incredible experiments.

Dissension and dissatisfaction no doubt developed as the group came to realize they might never be allowed to give their "aeros" to the world. They may have hoped that someone — Dellschau calls him "the right man" — would arrive to defy the "superiors" and make the airship public property. (Not all that public, of course. The group stood to collect a fortune for their enterprise.)

While airships were seen over America from time to time in the years before 1896, widespread sustained flights seem to have become necessary in that year for whatever reason. To maintain secrecy in a period when airships for the first time would be observed widely the society agreed to plant a series of conflicting and therefore misleading

claims. The ploy worked, of course.

The "superiors," the nonhuman entities, had their own ships but they took care not to be seen while their human agents captured the headlines. Conceivably the human beings were little more than pawns in some cosmic game. The weirdest incidents — those putting airships in a paranormal framework — well may have been the important ones, while the more mundane sightings were designed only to distract attention while the nonhumans set about doing whatever they intended to accomplish.

If Dellschau was lying, then we must revise our theory only to exclude the German and Sonora, Calif., headquarters. The exis-

tence of a secret society in contact with nonhumans still can be inferred from other evidence.

To pursue our initial hypothesis to its conclusion, let us suppose that Dellschau retired to Houston late in the 19th Century, as in fact he did, depressed and discouraged because it looked as if the whole amazing business would remain a secret forever. Still intimidated by the "superiors" and afraid to speak directly, nonetheless he determined to leave the world a series of clues in the hope that someday a "Wonder Weaver" would find them and sew the entire dazzling fabric together.

Too much to swallow, you say? But can you think of a better explanation?



### REFUGE FOR A MONSTER?

*By Lucius Farish*

A GROUP of Newport, Ark., residents is concerned about the welfare of their local "White River Monster," a mysterious aquatic creature which reportedly has been seen in nearby White River for many years. Following a rash of monster sightings in 1971, the citizens submitted a proposal to Newport's Board of Directors. The resolution would declare a stretch of White River from New Newport to Batesville, Ark., as the "White River Monster Sanctuary and Refuge."

The board also was asked to designate a song about the mon-

ster, written by noted folk singer Jimmy Driftwood, the "White River Monster Anthem."

If these proposals are adopted the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission will be asked to give official sanction to the monster refuge.

In an editorial dealing with the proposals the *Northwest Arkansas Times* of Fayetteville, Ark., stated that the project "appears to be well conceived and deserves sympathetic attention." As the *Times* noted, "There aren't that many authentic monsters left in (Arkansas) waters."

"UFO REPORT", SUMMER 1975

# THE CALIFORNIA "AIRSHIP" SCARE OF 1896

In this continuing series, our team of researchers investigates a wave of strange aerial phenomena that had government officials trying to calm a panicky public

By Jerome Clark and Lucius Farish

From his observatory in San Francisco the astronomer watched the light in the sky. The UFO had the magnitude of the planet Venus, and hung about one degree from the setting sun. He suspected it was a new comet, and so he informed a colleague, Professor Perrins of the Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton east of San Jose, by telegram the next afternoon. At dusk that evening Perrins looked through his telescope and scanned the sky in the vicinity of the sun. He saw nothing out of the ordinary. The date was Sept. 21, 1896.

About a month earlier, some time in the latter part of August, William Jordan of San Rafael, Calif., was chasing a wounded deer through the Tamalpais Mountains when he ran into a brush pile about 10 feet high. He approached it cautiously, only to hear a stern voice yell out, "What are you doing here? What do you want?" Jordan turned to the man who had suddenly appeared and explained about the wounded deer. "We've been camping here a month or so and we've never seen a deer," the stranger replied, "but if you think a deer is in the neighborhood, I'll help you find it. We could use a little meat in our camp."

Less than 500 yards away they discovered the dead animal and together dragged it into the brush corral. Inside, Jordan was amazed to find a well-equipped machine shop, evidently set up there for the construction of a now nearly-completed airship. The six men involved in the project swore the hunter to secrecy, then said that they would be flying it in the near future.

That, at any rate, is the story Jordan told the *San Francisco Call* two months later, after "airship" had become a household word throughout the state of California. But before that happened, three more puzzling episodes would quietly occur.

In late October, a fruit rancher and his family near Bowman, in Placer County, observed a brilliantly-lighted airship sailing overhead. About a week later San Francisco Mayor Adolph Sutoro's servants told him that, while he was gone one evening, a weird flying object with a bright searchlight had hovered in the air just off shore over Seal Rock (the mayor's mansion, which was west of the city, overlooked the Pacific Ocean). The mayor forgot the incident until two weeks later, when a dramatic series of startling events forced him to recall the story.

On November 15th, three days before California's Unidentified Flying Objects would break into the headlines, two young San Andreas women, Hannah Harney and Ella Potter, sighted a large bright light high in the northern sky. They watched it for 10 minutes. At first, they said, it "seemed about the size of a saucer" (a curiously prophetic description), but it continued to decrease in size until it finally disappeared. Talking with other townspeople, they found they were not the only ones who had seen the peculiar light. No one, however, had any idea what it was. If they had seen it two or three days later, they probably would have called it an "airship."

Between six and seven p.m. on

November 17th hundreds of Sacramento citizens of all ages and backgrounds would see, in the words of the *Sacramento Bee*, an "aerial ship, ghost, or meteor." Only the superstitious thought it was the second and only determined skeptic the third. Those who personally saw it were most emphatic that it was a piloted, man-made aircraft.

Some witnesses even insisted they heard voices or saw men inside the object. According to some, when the ship skirted too low over housetops, a voice shouted out, "Lift her up quick!" R. L. Lowry, who claimed to have seen the thing from the distance of only 50 feet, said it was cigar-shaped and operated by four men who moved as if they were riding a bicycle. It was kept aloft by the rapid motion of propellers. Other people asserted they had heard "singing" from inside the cabin. These voices, however, had a curiously artificial quality, as if emanating from a phonograph record.

Most observers, however, didn't hear a thing. They did see the object travel in from the east and sail off in a southerly direction with a somewhat erratic motion. G. C. Snyder, a streetcar repairman, gave a typical description: "Last evening, about 10 minutes before seven o'clock, I saw a light, which was then above, approximately, 27th and P Streets, sailing in a southwesterly direction. It rose and fell and swayed from right to left as if it were being propelled by some motor power. It was a white light and was not a star or meteor, I am certain of that." J. H. Vogel, a bartender, said, "I saw the light and above it a

dark body dimly outlined in the form of an egg with the small end forward. I heard a muffled buzzing of machinery."

Another witness, George Scott, an assistant to the California Secretary of State, spotted the object from the steps of the State Capitol Building. He and three other aides went up to the observation deck at the top of the Capitol dome. From there they could see the dim outline of a dark body with three lights attached.

The following afternoon an airship passed over Oak Park, a Sacramento suburb, leaving a trail of smoke behind.

For a brief period airship sightings stopped, giving both skeptics and believers a chance to debate the merits of their respective cases. Skeptics, who were in the considerable majority, held that the alleged witnesses were drunks and fools, while believers, almost all of whom had seen the controversial phenomenon themselves argued that a secret inventor must be responsible. But one imaginative soul, who signed himself only as "W. A.," wrote the *Sacramento Bee*: "In my investigation of this subject, it would seem that this visitor is from our neighboring planet Mars... It is supposed that the Lord Commissioner of Mars, in sending out his airship, is seeking to establish telegraphic or telephone communication between the planets." W. A. did not explain why the "Martians" spoke perfect English or how a dirigible-like construction such as the airship could travel interplanetary distances.

On November 20th, the airships were back. South of Sacramento, at the village of Tagus, D. H. Risdon and another man reportedly saw something "like a canvas sheet spread out, floating in a northeasterly direction at about an altitude of 2,000 feet."

The next day a more familiar-looking object swooped low over downtown Sacramento and was seen by hundreds of startled citizens. The "thing" was spotted first in the northwestern sky, heading slowly southwest. When it reached the southern edge of the city, it turned west, then south, and disappeared for a while, only to reappear in the west moving to the northwest.

Isaac Gough apparently was the first to see it. After convincing himself he wasn't seeing things, he ran down the street sounding the alarm. People poured out of the saloons, stores, and hotels to catch a glimpse of the aerial visitor. Those who saw it through field glasses or telescopes described it as a bright light suspended from a large, dark body. Among the witnesses were observers from the skeptical *Sacramento Record-Union* who returned to their desks quite shaken by the experience. Other observers included a group of state officials, including the governor's executive secretary.

On the 22nd, two Methodist ministers, Reverends H. Copeland and John Kirby, watched a red "fireball" with white lights on the front and back near Knights Ferry in Stanislaus County. The object first rose in the air, then descended to skim the ground, pick up speed, and disappear from sight.

The same day an airship passed over San Francisco and Oakland. At five p.m. occupants of a crowded streetcar in Oakland were among the first to note its presence, and they later told reporters the object was an egg-shaped vessel with a brilliant searchlight. Charles H. Ellis was walking home when the airship, which had come in from the east, flew overhead in the direction of San Francisco, where several minutes later it hovered above the shoreline and illuminated the seals on the rocks below with its searchlight. It drifted southwest and reappeared at Folsom between six and seven p.m., disappearing into a dense cloud. It was in Oakland once more shortly after nine a.m. and was lost from sight when it traveled across the bay to the San Francisco hills. At 11:30 it flew over San Jose and headed toward Mt. Hamilton, site of the Lick Observatory.

But while the airship was flying over northern California, things on the ground were beginning to get extremely complicated. The very day the strange aerial visitor returned to the city, the *San Francisco Call* published an interview with lawyer George D. Collins, who claimed, "It is perfectly true that there is at last a successful airship in

existence... I have known of this affair for some time and am acting as attorney for the inventor. He is a very wealthy man who had been studying the subject of flying machines for 15 years, and who came here seven years ago from the state of Maine in order to be able to perfect his ideas away from the eyes of other inventors...

"I saw the machine one night last week at the inventor's invitation. It is made of metal, is about 150 feet long and is built to carry 15 persons... It is built on the aeroplane system and has two canvas wings 18 feet wide and a rudder shaped like a bird's tail. The inventor climbed into the machine, and after he had been moving some of the mechanism for a moment, I saw the thing begin to ascend from the Earth very gently... The machine was under perfect control all the time.

"When it got to a height of about 90 feet the inventor shouted to me that he was going to make a series of circles and then descend. He immediately did so, beginning by making a circle about 100 yards in diameter, and gradually narrowing until the machine got within 30 feet of the ground. It then fell straight down, very gracefully, touching the Earth as lightly as a falling leaf."

Collins said his client, whom he never named even after the man's identity had become common knowledge, had flown from Oroville to Sacramento, a distance of 65 miles, several days before. It had been his airship which so many people had seen. According to Collins, the craft was hidden outside San Francisco, and guarded by three men. He said that within a matter of days, after the inventor had perfected the last flaws in the craft's flight mechanism, he would fly over the city's main business district so that everyone could get a close look at the machine. The mysterious inventor's application was at the Patent Office in Washington, D.C.

The inventor turned out to be E. H. Benjamin. The *Call* established that Benjamin had been seen in the Oroville area, where he had invented a device which would "revolutionize the world."

(Continued on page 44)

## INDIAN SPACE GODS

(Continued from page 43)

some of the metal seemed intact while the rest had decomposed.

What was Mrs. Maxey's opinion of the object within the rock?

"One possibility is that it is barely 100 years old—something that lay in a mud bed, then got baked and hardened by the sun in a matter of a few years." (However, Mrs. Maxey supplied the information that in the opinion of a trained geologist, who examined the fossil shells encrusting it, the nodule had taken at least 500,000 years to attain its present form.) "Or else it is an instrument as old as legendary Mu or Atlantis. Perhaps it is a communications device or some sort of directional finder or some instrument made to utilize power principles we know nothing about."

When Ron Calais did the basic research on the Coso artifact for the *INFO Journal*, editor Paul J. Willis accepted the challenge to come up with an idea of what the object might have been. After examining X-ray photos of the geode and doodling a bit with his pencil, Willis said the hexagonal part reminded him of a spark plug!

Then Willis and his brother Ron, tried to saw a common spark plug in half near its hexagon. They soon found the porcelain was too hard for their hacksaw, but they did manage to get the plug apart.

"We found the components similar to the Coso artifact," Ron Willis writes, "but with some differences. The copper ring around the halves displayed in the object seems to correspond to a copper sealer ring in the upper part of the steel casing of any spark plug."

It is their belief that the hexagonal area in the geode is probably composed of rust, the remains of a steel casing. The Willis brothers also noted that the central shaft of the spark plug they had taken apart had a tint which reminded them of brass.

The upper end of the object appears to end in a spring, but Ron and Paul Willis theorized that what is seen in the X-ray photograph might be "the remains of a corroded piece of metal with threads."

Although the larger metallic piece in the upper section of the Coso artifact may not seem to correspond exactly with a contemporary spark plug, the overall effect is certainly that of some kind of electrical apparatus. If it is some bizarre trick of Nature, it is indeed a good one.

There are numerous other artifacts indicative of an advanced precataclysmic technology on the North American continent. I recount the details of several of them in my book *Mysteries of Time & Space* (Prentice-Hall, 1974).

Among the evidence for a prehistoric industrialized society is the following intriguing discovery:

In 1953, miners of the Lion coal mine of Wattis, Utah, broke into a network of tunnels between five and six feet in height and width, which contained coal of such vast antiquity that it had become weathered to a state of uselessness for any kind of burning. A search outside the mountain in direct line with the tunnels revealed no sign of any entrance. Since the tunnels were discovered when the miners were working an eight-foot-wide coal seam at 8,500 feet below the surface, the evidence is irrefutable that an undetermined person conducted an ambitious mining project so far back in time that all exterior traces have eroded away.

Prof. John E. Wiltsen of the Department of Engineering, University of Utah, was quoted in the February 1954, issue of *Coal Age*, as stating:

"Without a doubt, both drifts were man-made. Though no evidence was found at the outcrop, the tunnels apparently were driven some 450 feet from

"... The Chippewa have a legend that tells of a great 'star with wings' that hovered over the treetops. Some of the wise men thought of it as a precursor of good; others, understandably, feared the star and saw it as a forerunner of terrible times..."

the outside to the point where the present workings broke into them... There is no visible basis for dating the tunnels..."

Jesse D. Jennings, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Utah, could offer no opinion as to the identity of the ancient miners, but he denied that the vast tunnels and coal mining rooms could have been the work of any Amerindian people.

"In the first place," he commented, "such works would have required immediate and local need for coal... because, before the white man came, transport was by human cargo carriers... As for local use, there was no reported extensive burning of coal by aboriginals in the region of the Wattis mine."

For those who are skeptical that a prehistoric civilization would have thrived on our own continent and left only the slightest vestige of its culture to alert future generations of its existence, let us consider what would happen if a catastrophe should wipe out our own civilization. What would remain for ar-

chaeologists to unearth 15,000 years from now?

We are builders in wood and metal. Our most majestic stone buildings are little more than facades supported by thin tendons of steel. In 1,000 years, even without flood, fire, or nuclear warfare, our major cities would be little more than rubble. Our complex super highways would be crumbled bits of stone beneath layers of vegetation. Our once intricate railway system would merely be red dust blowing in the wind.

If volcanic lava and dust should happen to blanket a major city in a sudden eruption—such as Mt. Vesuvius did to Herculaneum and Pompeii—a portion of our civilization would be preserved as if in a gigantic museum display.

But if we were to enter another ice age and enormous glaciers should creep down from the north, as they have done several times previously in the past million years, everything in their inexorable path would be pulverized. One such glacier would be enough to wipe out any trace of our civilization. Perhaps only scattered pieces of porcelain would remain to inspire future scholars to write doctoral dissertations on what manner of priesthood served which deity at the altar of the flush toilet.

In my own thinking, I have narrowed the matter down to the following, personal analogy: although the Iowa village in which I live is small and several hours away from any large, metropolitan area, we have all the modern conveniences, along with up-to-date shops and supermarkets, a well-staffed hospital, and a small college. Let us hypothesize the unpleasant situation of the entire civilized world blasting itself to nuclear bits. All the major cities are obliterated, but life in small villages such as ours does its best to continue.

The television set is no longer functional, except, perhaps, as something on which to stack books. The radio is functional only until the local station has a breakdown which will necessitate ordering new parts. It is impossible, of course, to order new parts for anything from anywhere. Automobiles are functional only until the storage tanks of gasoline have been exhausted and the local mechanics can no longer improvise repairs.

The doctors at the hospital and the clinics do their best to instruct the more intelligent among us in the rudiments of modern medicine; but modern medicine's magic is very weak without its attendant technology, which has now been destroyed. The teachers and professors at the public schools and the college do their best to keep alive the ideals of our culture; but effective crop raising now seems much more important than philosophy, and survival must



take priority over Shakespeare.

The years pass. One day the last machine breaks down, and there is no one who remembers how to repair it. The X-ray machines, the radios, the long-dead dry cell batteries, although still revered, are useless. They will soon be forgotten as actual implements, but they will be elevated to the status of magical artifacts in the legends of the Iowa villagers, as survival instinct sends them back into the rapidly encroaching forests.

Someday, perhaps 20,000 years in the future, someone will "remember" how to use the marvelous machines: the box that could see other people thousands of miles away; the machine that could look through humans; the chariot that could fly through the clouds. Or perhaps someday more technologically sophisticated men and women from across the big water will declare those Iowa villagers to be primitive, aboriginal people of the New World.

Since the concept of "ancient astronauts" has become a popular one in the last few years, it would be only fair to consider briefly that the various artifacts which we have discussed in this article might have been "seeded" on this continent by colonists from other worlds or other dimensions. It is also conceivable that the collective unconscious of the Amerindians may recall their origin in a culture which might be found on some other planet, rather than a "lost civilization" on Earth. Or that same collective unconsciousness may harbor memories of the intimate interaction of their ancestors with extraterrestrial visitors.

Just as Great Britain had its Stonehenge, Egypt its pyramids, and the Mayans their temples, which served as giant calendars as well as impressive monuments, the nomadic Plains Indians of North America had their Big Horn Medicine Wheel to signal the summer solstice—or, perhaps, the "gods."

Just above the timberline in the Big Horn Mountains of northern Wyoming, the Medicine Wheel's pattern of stones etches an imperfect circle with a diameter of about 80 feet. A cairn of stones about 15 feet in diameter establishes the hub of the wheel. Twenty-eight "spokes" jut out from the hub and connect with the outer rim.

The Big Horn Mountains held special significance for the Crow, the Sioux, the Arapahoe, the Shoshone, or the Cheyenne—any of whom might have erected the wheel—but none of these tribes were known for building any kind of stone monuments. Bits of wood found in one of the six smaller cairns situated unevenly about the rim indicates that the Medicine Wheel has been there since at least 1760. The monument has been known to white

men for well over 100 years, but conjecture about its true purpose has only inspired mysteries and tall tales.

In the June 7, 1974, issue of *Science*, astronomer John A. Eddy of the High Altitude Observatory in Boulder, Col., states that two summers' research have convinced him that the Big Horn Monument may well have been a primitive astronomical observatory that served its creators at least as well as Stonehenge served its primitive astronomers. The high altitude (9,640 feet) and the clear horizons of the monument make the marking of sunrise and sunset at the summer solstice easily visible. The accurate knowledge of the first day of summer would have been a most important bit of information for a nomadic people whose very lives depended on astute awareness of seasonal changes.

There are numerous Amerindian legends which suggest an interaction between native American peoples and Star Dwellers. Nearly every tribe has its accounts of "Sky Ropes"—ropes of feathers that permitted People From

"... There are numerous Amerindian legends which suggest an interaction between native American peoples and Star Dwellers. Nearly every tribe has its account of 'Sky Ropes'—ropes of feathers that permitted People From Above to come to the Earth Mother..."

Above to come to the Earth Mother and, on occasion, enabled men and women to fly to the clouds. Along with the magical ropes are tales of flying canoes, airships, and moons that descended to Earth.

Many Amerindian tribes believed that the stars were the homes of higher beings who had a connection with, and a mysterious relationship to, humans. Others held that the stars were themselves actual ministering intelligences.

Numerous tribes had accounts of warriors who had found themselves enamored of Star Wives and of tribeswomen who had been enticed by Star Husbands. Often the Amerindians found "magic circles" which the Star People had burned into the grass, just as their European brothers across the ocean were finding "fairy circles" that the dancing elves had tropped into the meadows during their nocturnal revels.

The Chippewa have a legend that tells of a great "star with wings" that hovered over the tree tops. Some of the wise men thought of it as a precursor of good; others, understandably, feared

the star and saw it as the forerunner of terrible times.

The star hovered near the village for nearly one moon (month) when a Star Maiden approached a young warrior and told him that she was from the winged star. They had returned from a faraway place to this, the land of their forefathers, and they loved the happy race they saw living in the village. The star, she said, wished to live among them.

The warrior told the council of this visitation, and representatives went to welcome the Star People with sweet-scented herbs in their peace pipes. The winged star stayed with them for only a brief time, however, before it left to live in the southern sky. As a token of its eternal love, according to the Chippewa, the Star People left the white water lily on the surface of the lakes.

There are literally hundreds of such Amerindian legends suggesting a steady line of interaction between the native Americans and the Sky People. There is an episode from the journal of an early cattleman which implies not only an association between the Amerindians and UFOs, but also with that mysterious creature variously called Bigfoot or Sasquatch.

The account was supplied by James C. Wyatt of Memphis, Tenn. In a journal dated 1888, Wyatt's grandfather records that he was somewhere along the Humboldt Line in the "Big Woods Country" where his father and several cowhands had wintered with a tribe of Indians after delivering some cattle to a fort farther north.

One day he came upon an Indian carrying a large platter of raw meat. At first the man seemed afraid to answer Wyatt's questions concerning his errand, but he finally asked the cattleman to follow him.

In a shallow cave in a cliff face dwelt a beast with long, shiny black hair that covered its entire body, except for its palms and an area around its eyes. The manlike creature did not seem wild or vicious; it sat cross-legged, Indian-style, to eat the raw meat. Wyatt described the creature as built like a big, well-developed man, except for its lack of neck and its long body hair. The creature's head seemed to rest directly on its shoulders.

"Crazy Bear," as the creature was called by the Indians, had been brought to the "Big Woods" from the stars. A "small moon" had flown down like a swooping eagle and had landed on a plateau a few miles from the Indian's encampment. The beast in the cave and two other "crazy bears" had been flung out of the "moon" before the craft had once again soared off to the stars.

Other "crazy bears" had been left in the vicinity over the years. The Indian

(Continued on page 52)

forces in the Far East, during WW II, and all reports of UFOs in the Devil's Triangle eventually came to him. It was MacArthur who, on Oct. 9, 1954, gave a speech in which he made this astonishing statement: "The nations of the world will have to unite, for the next war will be an interplanetary war. The nations of Earth must someday make a

common front against attack by people from other planets."

He did not say the next war *may* be interplanetary. He said *will* be, and that *we must* make a common front in the face of the space enemy. How could he make such positive statements? *What did he know that we don't?*

Did the reports from the Devil's

Triangle convince him that UFOs were behind it all? Did he have even more direct evidence, such as our planes fighting it out with flying saucers—and losing?

Buried in secret files at the Pentagon, locked-up for "security" reasons, may be MacArthur's iron-clad proof that in the Devil's Triangle lies the ominous secret of the flying saucers. ★

## 1896 "AIRSHIPS"

(Continued from page 45)

Benjamin—so reports had it—had been a dentist in his native Maine.

By the next day Collins had changed his story. Besieged by reporters, scientists, and cranks who crowded his office that morning, Collins complained, "I will tell you that much that has been attributed to me is absolutely false. Once and for all, I have never seen the airship and actually know very little about it."

He went on to say that a week before a wealthy man had approached him to ask if he would represent his interests in the patenting of an airship. "The description he gave me of the airship," Collins related, "was very incomplete. It gave me no idea of the nature of the machine or how it operates. It was in its very early stages and quite unfit for legal purposes. I have yet to see the model." The inventor, he added, came from San Francisco, not Oroville.

Collins's denials probably should not be taken too seriously, for several days later the inventor fired him because he was talking too much. The man who replaced him, William Henry Harrison Hart, was a former State Attorney General and one of the most respected men in California.

Hart subsequently revealed that there were two airships, an eastern and a western one. "I have been concerned with the eastern invention for some time personally," he said. "The idea is to consolidate both interests." Concerning the western craft, he remarked, "From what I have seen of it, I have not the least doubt that it will carry four men and 1,000 pounds of dynamite. I am quite convinced that two or three men could destroy the city of Havana in 48 hours."

The airship inventors worked out of California and New Jersey. The former instructed Hart to say that "if the Cubans would give him \$10 million he would wipe out the Spanish stronghold." If the Cubans ever heard of the offer, they did not accept it.

In the meantime, Californians were sighting mysterious airships all over the state. On November 23rd, shortly after 10 p.m., Henry Smith and F. Becker of Redwood City, saw a fast-moving, brilliantly-lighted, cigar-shaped object

with enormous wings. Something similar had appeared two and a half hours earlier at Santa Rosa. The next day Red Bluff got an opportunity to see the thing. On the 27th, a "strange light" floated over Michigan Bar.

The same night Case Gilson and a group of friends got an especially good look at the object as it sailed over Oakland at around eight p.m.

"The airship was moving very rapidly from the southeast toward Lorin," Gilson said, "and not a light was visible. It was about 1,200 or 1,500 feet in the air and looked like a great black cigar with a fish-like tail. If it had side propellers, they were revolving so rapidly that I could not see them. The body was at least 100 feet long and attached to it was a triangular tail... The surface of the airship looked as if it were made of

"... As it turned out, however, the Golden State airship scare was only a prelude to an incredibly massive, nationwide UFO wave which would erupt in late March. But as early as March, farmers in Delaware were seeing eerie lights sailing silently overhead..."

aluminum which wind and weather had turned dark. I saw all this distinctly, and I am willing to take any oath to the truth of what I say.

"The airship went at a tremendous speed. As it neared Lorin it turned quickly and disappeared in the direction of San Francisco. At half past eight we saw it again, when it took about the same direction and disappeared."

Even though airship witnesses included such notables as the president of San Jose's Garden City College, Prof. H. B. Worcester, the skeptics were not impressed. "What people have been taking for the brilliant electric light of an airship," Professor Burckhalter of the Chabot Observatory told the press, "is nothing more or less than one of two planets, Mars or Venus. People want to believe in the airship and it is

astonishing the way they deceive themselves." The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it "more of a hoax than an airship."

But somehow those who had seen the object remained impervious to the ridicule heaped upon them, and as the flap continued, with reports now numbering in the hundreds, the stories became more fantastic.

Two fishermen, for instance, told how they had seen an airship land along the Pacific shoreline several hundred yards from the boat. The craft descended near the beach and floated easily while its three occupants waded through the water and guided it toward the beach. Once there, the trio dragged it into the woods.

Excited, Giuseppe Valinziano and Luigi Valdivia pulled in their nets and started for shore themselves. After several attempts—the surf was rough and landing was difficult—they succeeded. But their struggle had attracted the attention of the aeronauts, who clearly were unhappy they had been spotted. One of them ordered the intruders to be on their way, but the fishermen pressed the man with questions. His only response was a threat to use force if they stepped out of their boat.

Valinziano and Valdivia remained persistent, however, until finally the man retreated into the woods to discuss the situation with his companions. Fifteen minutes later he returned and beckoned Valinziano and Valdivia to follow him.

The others were waiting at the edge of the trees. One, whom his fellow aeronauts invariably addressed as "captain," did most of the talking.

"I suppose your curiosity has been aroused by our rather unusual method of traveling," he said. "I am not yet ready to make my discovery known to the public, but hope to be able to do so as soon as some slight changes are made in its construction. Until such time I must refuse to allow anyone to make a close inspection. You are welcome to get such a view of the ship as you can from a distance, but any attempt at closer inspection will meet with forcible resistance." He refused to reveal anything about the ship's construction or its intended destination. He would say only that the trip was "experimental."

As he talked, the two others busily repaired the airship. The craft was well stocked with provisions and when it came time to eat, the fishermen were invited to dine with the crew.

Afterwards, as Valinziano and Valdivia prepared to leave, the captain promised them a ride on the airship if they would stay until repairs were completed. Several hours later, the work almost done, the captain said it would be impossible to take them aboard, and he let them go. The fishermen had long since begun to suspect his real motive in detaining them so long was to keep them from alerting others to the airship's location.

Another puzzling incident took place on December 6th at Fresno, where a dusty, obviously travel worn stranger stopped at a store and asked for George Jennings. Jennings, who had been in a back room, came out to greet the man like an old friend. A whispered conversation followed, and other workers standing by could not help overhearing the word "airship" frequently.

Soon after, Jennings talked freely to a reporter for the *Fresno Semi-Weekly Expositor*, balking only at giving his friend's name.

"It is true the airship is in Fresno County," he said. "Just where I do not know myself. It is also true that the man who was in here a short time ago is one of the inventors. He told me that the trip to this country was involuntary upon the part of the men in the airship. In other words, the machine came itself and they couldn't stop it. His statement was that they were flying, as usual, around Contra Costa County Hills and rose to a height of about 1000 feet. Suddenly the airship struck a current of air and refused to answer its steering gear. It was borne rapidly southward against all efforts to change its course until suddenly the current of air seemed to lessen and the machine once more became manageable. The men aboard at once descended and flew about looking for a hiding place, which they at length found."

Jennings said that his friend had since gone to San Francisco for supplies and men, adding he was sure people in the nearby towns of Selma and Watertown must have observed the craft as it limped through the air in search of a hiding place.

Perhaps significantly, just the day before, the *San Francisco Call* had published a letter from five Watertown residents who told of seeing an enormous airship nearly collide with a cornice on the city's post office building the evening of November 20th. The craft had an "intensely brilliant" light and the witnesses could see human forms aboard the object.

An airship also appeared at Selma on

December 5th.

Referring to his inventor friend, Jennings reported, "He said if the news from Washington was satisfactory he would bring his airship over to Fresno where everyone could see it."

Airship sightings continued throughout California, but at a decreasing rate throughout December. Scattered reports were also made in Oregon, Washington, and Arizona.

Of these incidents, the most interesting was related by a railroad conductor named Corbell, who said that on the evening of December 7th, an airship had paced his freight train. At the time—around 6:30 p.m.—the train was moving between Dixon and Elmira.

The first to see it was a man named Byrns, who noticed two bright lights to the right of the track traveling parallel to the caboose. He watched them for a few minutes before calling the conductor. Corbell in turn alerted two stockmen who were onboard. The four watched the lights, which were at an altitude of approximately 1,000 feet, for a few minutes before the UFOs accelerated and disappeared into the southwestern sky.

What may have been the final California airship sightings were reported from Lodi and Acampo in mid-January 1897.

As it turned out, however, the Golden State's airship scare was only a prelude

to an incredibly massive, nationwide UFO wave which would erupt in late March. But as early as January, farmers in Delaware were seeing eerie lights sailing silently overhead, and all during February and March airships haunted the rural backwaters of Kansas and Nebraska. By April the flap was at its height, with sightings being logged in staggering numbers everywhere.

Where before speculation about a secret inventor had centered on one man (Benjamin), now dozens of names were being tossed about. There were frequent contact stories, almost always with occupants of normal human appearance and manner who would make extravagant, conflicting claims about themselves and their supposed inventions. Significantly, in all of this, Benjamin's name never came up.

Still, does this mean that the airships (apparently there were dozens of them) were constructed and flown by ordinary earthbound mortals? Probably not.

To begin with, let us consider the testimony of Charles H. Gibbs-Smith:

"Speaking as an aeronautical historian who specializes in the periods before 1910, I can say with certainty that the only airborne vehicles, carrying passengers, which could possibly have been seen anywhere in North America in 1897 were free flying spherical balloons, and it is highly unlikely for these to be mistaken for anything else. No

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form of dirigible (i.e. a gasbag propelled by an airscrew) or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying—or indeed could fly—at this time in America.”

Furthermore, the U. S. Patent Office in Washington, D. C., denied Benjamin's claim (echoed by Jennings' friend) that the airship was being patented. A check through that agency's files confirms this. C. A. Smith of San Francisco was granted an airship patent on Aug. 11, 1896, two and a half months before Benjamin maintained his was in the works. But by his own admission Smith's device never got off the ground. Neither did that of Henry Heintz of Elkton, S. D., who received a patent on Apr. 20, 1897.

There is also the fact that the 1896-97 airships could hover, a feat more conventional aircraft could not duplicate for quite a few decades, then there were the many reports that the craft possessed brilliant searchlights, something which, for reasons we have explained earlier ("The New Zealand 'Airship' Wave of 1909," *UFO Report Winter '74*), was far beyond the technical ability of the period.

Finally, and perhaps most interesting of all, airship sightings did not begin in 1896-97, nor did they end there. Airships first appeared in northern Europe in the late 1850s. That at least is what

German immigrants asserted when similar objects were exciting the American public 40 years later.

We know that on Mar. 26, 1880, an airship and its 10 occupants were seen over Galisteo Junction, N. M. In 1909-10, a worldwide flap occurred, taking in parts of the U. S., the British Isles, Sweden, and New Zealand. In 1912-13 airships were back in Britain and made their final bow in South Africa in 1914 (see "The Phantom Airships of 1913," *UFO Report Summer '74*).

The vast scope of airship activity alone makes the terrestrial inventor theory extremely improbable.

To understand precisely what was happening in 1896 would require volumes of complicated analyses. Putting it as briefly as possible, we must assume that the intelligence behind the UFOs—which some researchers now call the Phenomenon—engaged in a weird game of deception; in other words they engineered manifestations to fit the prevailing social environment. In 1896 there was a great deal of interest in the prospect of flight; therefore the aerial objects of the period parodied the dirigibles which then were being flown in Europe. The misleading impressions the airship manifestations generated were further "confirmed" by the spurious claims of the mysterious E.

H. Benjamin.

And who was E. H. Benjamin? He certainly was not who he said he was, that much is certain. Nonetheless we have the word of William H. H. Hart, the former State Attorney General, that the man did have an airship and did seem to know a great deal about the craft's operations.

Either Benjamin was a UFO contactee, or he was not a human being at all but an agent of the paranormal intelligence, something on the order of our own modern-day "Men In Black." We realize these are fantastic conclusions, but we see no alternative.

The entire issue of deception has sparked considerable controversy among ufologists over the past 10 years. Most now agree that all kinds of deceptions take place. The dispute is over their extent and significance. There are some researchers, like one of the authors of this article, who believe that today's spaceship-style UFOs are merely another disguise the Phenomenon has donned, that we are being fooled just as the people of the late 19th Century, were deceived by airships.

But whatever the case, it is obvious that the many questions raised by the great airship scare take us right to the dark, inner core of the UFO mystery. ★

## ALIEN SATELLITES

(Continued from page 37)

orbiting Earth.

Another half-mile wide body was sighted by astronomer Henry Harrison on the night of Apr. 12-13, 1879, at an altitude of 80 to 100 miles. From the charts of its movements, it changed its orbital plane and made other "erratic" maneuvers that no natural body could. He left the riddle unexplained but today it fits perfectly the idea of a huge UFO in orbit.

Most remarkable of all was the photo taken by the famous Barnard of the Great Comet of 1882, showing six distinct luminous round bodies near the head of the comet. Nearby was also a spindle-shaped object that Morris K. Jessup in one of his books labeled a "mother ship."

Now it is a fact that many startled astronomers of the past century saw "comets" splitting into six or more parts. Even more inexplicably they sometimes observed luminous bodies joining together! These queer events were totally incomprehensible phenomena to the 19th Century stargazers, but in the light of modern research into UFO phenomena, we now can see how closely they fit the mother-ship theory.

Which brings us to what must be, in official circles, the most sensitive ques-

tion about orbiting UFOs. Are these sky phenomena really giant mother-ships that are "parked" on-orbit?

There is strong evidence that they are indeed the parent craft from which all other UFOs come. That is, the innumerable small flying saucers sighted daily and nightly on Earth do not simply fly here from their native world far out in the universe.

The logical sequence is as follows: The native world launches gigantic interstellar craft which perhaps go faster than light or use some "time warp" to shorten the otherwise super-long journey.

These carrier craft, upon reaching our solar system, land at some base, with Mars and the moon the most likely places. From the moon, then, huge mother-ships fly to Earth and take up orbit, releasing their broods of smaller "scout" craft that then go down into the atmosphere on their various missions. The mystery satellites, as listed, probably represent a tiny fraction of the true number of mother-ships in temporary orbit at any one time. No doubt most of them use a "parking orbit" 10,000 or more miles high, well beyond the 1,000 mile limit of our Spacetrack radars. Thus, the vast majority of mother-ships, unless caught accidentally in astronomers' telescopes, are unseen and unknown on Earth. To account for the many hundreds or perhaps thousands

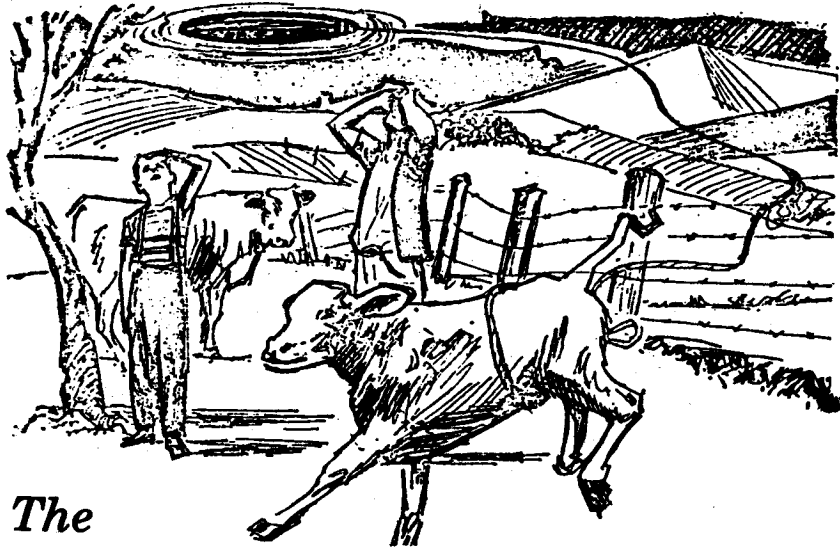
of UFO sightings seen daily all around the world, there must at any given time be dozens or even hundreds of mother-ships up in orbit, discharging their payloads of scout craft.

Some mother-ships are seen at low altitude, usually in the form of big cigar-shaped craft hanging at an angle among clouds. But these could be no more than 1,000 feet in length and they themselves probably come from the true mother-ships hanging out in space.

These orbital mother-ships must be truly gigantic. As we saw before, astronomers estimated the strange "bodies" they saw at a half-mile wide or so. However, some of the mystery satellites give indications of being over a mile in diameter, where bodies seen between the earth and moon through telescopes—mother-ships plying back and forth—have been 10 to 25 miles in length.

There is some direct evidence that the mother-ships are behemoths beside which our biggest rockets and satellites are mere bits of buckshot. On 10 different occasions, from Aug. 19, 1949 to Mar. 10, 1950, a tremendous UFO was seen hanging in the sky over Ohio and disgorging groups of smaller objects shaped like Indian oar-rowheads. The extended observations allowed exact calculations to be made of the mother-craft's size, which came out to a minimum of 10,000 feet or two

Feb-77



## The GREAT AIRSHIP HOAX

In April 1897 a Kansas rancher witnessed one of the  
strangest events in UFO history — or did he?

By Jerome Clark

ON APRIL 23, 1897, the *Yates Center* (Kans.) *Farmer's Advocate* published an amazing story which in the following weeks would be reprinted in newspapers all over America and Europe.

A prominent local rancher, Alexander Hamilton, testified that four days before, he, his son Wallace and hired man Gid Heslip had observed "an airship slowly descending upon my cow lot, about 40 rods from the house."

Startled, the three men had rushed out to the corral, where they discovered a calf caught in the fence, with some sort of rope or cable tied around its neck. The rope led up to the airship, which was "cigar-shaped . . . with a carriage underneath . . . occupied by six of the strangest beings I ever saw. There were two men, a woman and three children. They were jabbering together but we could not understand a syllable they said." The beings turned a powerful searchlight

on the men below, then flew away with the calf in tow.

The next day Lank Thomas, who lived several miles from the Hamilton place, found the hide, legs and head of a calf in his field. He recognized Hamilton's brand but he could not understand why there were no tracks in the soft ground around the remains. The explanation, of course, was that the airship's occupants had dropped them from the sky.

Hamilton's first-person narrative was backed up by an impressive affidavit.

"As there are now, always have been, and always will be skeptics and unbelievers, whenever the truth of anything bordering on the improbable is presented, and knowing that some ignorant or suspicious people will doubt the truthfulness of the above account, now, therefore, we, the undersigned, do hereby make the following affidavit. That we have known Alex Hamilton from 15 to 30 years and that for truth and veracity have never heard his word questioned and that we do verily believe his statement to be true and correct."

Five residents of nearby Burlington, Kans., also signed a statement which attested to Hamilton's honesty. In addition the *Advocate* noted that "Mr. Hamilton looked as if he had not entirely recovered from the shock and everyone who knew him was convinced he was sincere in every word."

In 1901 *The History of Allen and Woodson Counties, Kansas* described Hamilton, a former member of the state House of Representatives, as "one who has served the county faithfully and well . . . (His) pop-

ularity in the community is unmistakable not only on account of his fidelity to duty in public office but also because of his honorable business career, his fidelity to manly principles and his reliability in private life."

One could hardly ask for a more reliable witness to a UFO sighting.

Over the years the story was never quite forgotten and from time to time Kansas newspapers would revive it, featuring it as a marvelous episode from the old days. During the 1920's an English nobleman wrote members of the Hamilton family (Alex himself had died in 1912) and said he was thinking of writing a book about it. Wallace Hamilton's daughter Elizabeth Linde, who still lives in Yates Center, remembers that the story survived as a family legend and an inevitable topic of conversation at reunions. She says, "We always believed it was a true story," but she does not remember ever hearing her father or grandfather discuss it.

In 1965 Jacques Vallée brought the story into the UFO Age and in *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* called it an incident "we will all have to remember." The next year, in an article in the April 1966 *FATE*, Lucius Farish concluded that "this case (is) one of the most astounding to be found on record!" In the following decade practically every book on the subject of UFOs mentioned it and the Kansas "calfnapping" became a classic UFO report.

It is, however, a hoax.

The truth about the affair was published in the January 28, 1943, issue of an obscure Kansas weekly newspaper, the *Buffalo Enterprise*.

The week before it had reprinted Hamilton's account, which brought this letter from Ed F. Hudson, who in 1897 had been editor of the *Yates Center Farmer's Advocate*:

"I had just bought and installed a little gasoline engine, the first I believe to come to Yates Center, using it to run my machinery replacing the hand-power on the old Country Campbell press and kicking the job presses. I invited many of my friends into the back shop to see the engine work. Hamilton was one of them. He exclaimed, 'Now they can fly,' hence the airship story that we made up. After we had published it, the story was copied in many of the largest newspapers in this country, England, France and Germany, some illustrating it with pen-drawn (imaginings by) their staff artists. There were also hundreds of inquiries from every part of the globe. Soon afterwards their (sic) came the various experiments in flight, but I have always maintained that Alex Hamilton was the real inventor of human flight."

Ben S. Hudson, Ed Hudson's son and the publisher of the *Fredonia Daily Herald*, explained in an accompanying note that his father and Hamilton had "concocted that story following a Saturday afternoon pow-wow which was customary for Saturdays in those days."

An American correspondent of R. J. M. Rickard, editor of England's *Fortean Times*, discovered the article in 1976 while engaged in an historical research project. Rickard in turn sent me a copy of the story. Seeking confirmation for Hudson's claims, I published a letter in the September 16,

1976, *Yates Center News* soliciting further information.

In reply Mrs. Donna Steeby of Wichita, Kans., wrote that her 93-year-old mother, Ethel L. Shaw, had actually heard the tale from Alexander Hamilton himself. Mrs. Shaw, who is hard of hearing but otherwise fully alert, supplied this statement:

"How well I remember that beautiful afternoon almost as though it were yesterday. I, as a young girl about 14 years old, was visiting in the Hamilton home with Mrs. Hamilton and their daughter Nell when Mr. Hamilton came home from town, put up his team and came into the sitting room where we were visiting. He pulled up a chair and almost immediately began relating this story by saying, 'Ma, I fixed up quite a story and told the boys in town and it will come out in the *Advocate* this weekend.'

"He seemed quite elated over what he had done but Mrs. Hamilton was rather shocked at what he had told them and at times would remark, 'Oh, Alex,' or 'Why, Alex!' But it didn't disturb us girls as we felt it was just a fabricated story, yet I pondered a little over it as I walked along on my way home that evening. I told my parents about it but they gave it no concern saying, 'Pay no attention to it as it's just another of his stories.'

"It seems there were a few men round about who had formed a club which they called 'Ananias' (Liars' Club). They would get together once in a while to see which one could tell the biggest story they'd concocted since their last meeting. Well, to my knowledge, the club soon broke up after the 'airship and cow' story. I



# THE LEROY, KANSAS CALFNAPPING HOAX OF 1897

Jerome Clark

SINCE discovering this past September that the famous Alex Hamilton calfnapping case was a piece of fiction concocted by a local liars' club, with Hamilton and *Yates Center Farmer's Advocate* editor Ed F. Hudson the principal inventors, I have received a number of comments from ufologists. Some were addressed to me personally. Others have been circulated by individuals who did not bother to ask me for clarification or further information. Most have suggested in one way or another that the hoax explanation is a hoax itself.

To clarify this issue I am writing this as an open letter to individuals familiar with the new developments in what has been a classic UFO case. (Articles explaining the matter in more detail will appear in *Fate*, *Fortean Times* and *The APRO Bulletin*.) I believe the following will lay to rest any reasonable doubts about the authenticity of the statements made separately (and over a 33-year period) by Mr. Hudson and Mrs. Shaw.

Several letters have asked me why I did not contact members of the Hamilton family for their reaction. I did just that early in September, shortly after Bob Rickard, editor of England's *Fortean Times* (Post Office Stores, Aldermaston, Berks. RG7 4LJ), sent me a copy of Hudson's statement published in a 1943 *Buffalo Enterprise*. Only one member of the family still lives in Yates Center, Kansas, and that is Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton Linde, the daughter of Wallace Hamilton (another supposed witness) and the granddaughter of Alex. I made a further phone call just this morning and last month mailed a manuscript copy of my *Fate* article "The Great Airship Hoax," which will appear in the February 1977 issue.

Mrs. Linde, a very nice lady who is 72 years old, told me during both interviews that, though the family believed the story to be true, they never believed it to be true very firmly. They never heard either Alex or Wall discuss the incident. They were familiar with the news accounts which would periodically reappear and they enjoyed the story as a "family legend." They knew that Alex Hamilton, who died in 1912, had a "darn good imagination"; on top of that contemporaries of the elder Hamilton had told them that *the story was a hoax concocted by Alex and the newspaper editor*. This happened, of course, several decades ago, when those who best knew the circumstances surrounding the "incident" were still alive. Asked her opinion of the veracity of Hamilton's account of the calfnapping, Mrs. Linde, who seems reluctant to give up her belief in such a charming family legend, said, "I guess it could have

been true or it could have been a lie." I asked her if she believes Mrs. Shaw's statement. Her reply: "If she says that's the way it was, that must be the way it was." Referring to modern aircraft and UFOs, she remarked, "What my grandfather told has come true, even if it wasn't a fact at the time. That's what is most interesting."

Mrs. Linde confirmed that Mrs. Shaw, then named Ethel Howard, lived near the now-nonexistent village of Vernon and was a close friend of Nell Hamilton, Alex's daughter.

It is extraordinarily improbable that Mrs. Shaw and Mr. Hudson should have lied about this matter. What could their possible motive be? One correspondent suggests it was to "clear the family name." As my wife comments, "Isn't it kind of late to do that now?" If that were the case, why should it be Mrs. Shaw (with whom Mrs. Linde has no social contact) and the late Mr. Hudson who tried to do this — and not a direct descendent such as Mrs. Linde, who apparently wants to believe in the "incident"? Moreover, what kind of attempt is it to "clear the family name" when its patriarch is revealed as a liar?

A second criticism has it that Alex Hamilton never would have revealed the hoax in front of Ethel Howard (Shaw). Nonsense. First of all, the tale was never meant to be much more than a harmless practical joke and there was no great effort to keep the truth a secret from the locals. The only people who were fooled were outsiders. Furthermore, Ethel Howard was a trusted friend of the Hamilton family and in fact later married Mrs. Linde's uncle.

The time has come for us as UFO researchers to admit that we were fooled by the Hamilton yarn, to learn the necessity of caution from it and to go on to deal with the many genuinely puzzling, genuinely unexplained aspects of the UFO mystery. If it is remembered at all, the LeRoy, Kansas, calfnapping should be recalled as a first rate modern fairy tale. Lake Bluff, Illinois.

— November 19, 1976.

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**TABLE 3**  
**"AIRSHIP" SIGHTINGS IN THE U.S.A.—**  
**APRIL 1897**

DATE	LOCALES (BY STATES)
Sunday 11	Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Arkansas
Monday 12	Illinois*, Michigan, Arkansas, Wisconsin
Tuesday 13	Michigan*, North Dakota*, Indiana, Texas
Wednesday 14	Michigan*, Illinois, Texas*
Thursday 15	Michigan*, Iowa, Illinois, Texas, South Dakota, D.C.
Friday 16	Michigan*, Iowa, Kansas, Arkansas, South Dakota, Texas
Saturday 17	Michigan*, Texas***, Iowa, Missouri
Sunday 18	Michigan, Texas*, Kansas, Arkansas

\* Numerous sightings in several areas

Table 3 summarizes the states affected by the peak of UFO activity in April, 1897—the third week of that month. This "flap" began with spectacular sightings over Kansas City, Kan. (April 1), and Chicago, Ill. (April 9), in which hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of people watched a large cigar-shaped object slowly and deliberately pass overhead. As with the California "flap" of '96, later witnesses assumed that the strange lights they viewed were actually attached to this same "airship". It is my contention that the deliberate day-time appearances of the "airship" were a diversion to give night-time witnesses a frame of reference for identifying the illuminated objects, many of which were *not* cigar-shaped. The illuminated objects are the *real* phenomenon. The "airship" was merely a cover.

Since the April, 1897, reports cover many states and widely separated areas, even though the sightings occurred simultaneously, we once again have evidence that many objects were being deployed. There was an outstanding number of reported landings that April, some involving police officers, a judge and an ex-senator. In nearly every case these witnesses described the UFO occupants as being dark complexioned, with dark eyes and slight stature. Dark-eyed, dark-haired females were mentioned in several of these accounts. The occupants spoke English with one notable exception. A judge in Arkansas claimed that he encountered "pilots" who looked like "Japs" and who could not make themselves understood.

A number of artifacts were dropped from these "airships", perhaps deliberately to offer further "proof" of the mundane origin of the objects. A Canadian newspaper was tossed overboard in Michigan, as were peeled potatoes and even a shoe. Several notes, one on finely-engraved stationery, were also planted in the wake of the "airship" to further substantiate the notion that a "secret inventor" was responsible for the furor.

My own personal experiences with several ingenious and carefully-planned "hoaxes" leads me to conclude that similar "hoaxes" were executed in 1897 to reduce the impact of the arrival and activities of the objects. A mystery man walked into the office of a prominent San

Francisco attorney shortly before the 1896 "flap" began. He claimed to have invented a marvellous "airship" and wanted the attorney to patent it. When the "airship" sightings hit the paper, the attorney, in good faith, told the press that he had met the inventor and knew all about it. The inventor disappeared, of course, and the attorney was left holding the bag. There are extensive newspaper reports on this incident and Gordon Lore devoted a chapter to it in his book.

I suspect that the "mystery man" was an advance man for "them" and that his sudden appearance prior to the "flap" was part of the carefully-conceived plan. The plan was further augmented by the mass sightings of an "airship" which resembled the dirigible-type craft then being experimented with in Europe. The Ufonauts established an excellent front for their operations with this tactic. It worked admirably well and, since most people believed a "secret inventor" was behind it all, the objects were not nearly as mysterious and disturbing as they might have been.

Because such manoeuvres are very common in UFO cases, I strongly recommend that every serious ufologist obtain and study a good text on psychological warfare. I was trained in psy-war during my tenure in the army and I have been astonished to find that the Ufonauts seem to be following "the book". It's time we recognized that something far more complex than a mere aerial survey is taking place in this situation.

The geographical factors of the 1897 "flap" are somewhat surprising. Michigan had 30.5 per cent of all the known sightings. Texas was next with over 20 per cent. In the Ohio Northern University study of 1952, they remarked that Texas seemed to be a leader in UFO incidents in that year. Most of the 1897 Texas sightings (which included several landings and contacts) took place in the northern part of the state. The very same areas still produce the bulk of the Texas sightings. Just over the border, in Oklahoma, there is an equal amount of consistent activity dating back to the last century.

The peak of the 1897 flap took place on April 17, 1897, a Saturday. You will recall that the Michigan "flap" of March, 1966, took place around Ann Arbor, Michigan. (There were sightings in Ann Arbor on April 17, 1897.) In fact, a UFO "belt" seems to stretch between Ann Arbor in the east and Benton Harbor in the western part of the state. This is the area producing the most reports in 1897, and this same area *still* produces the majority of our Michigan reports.

On April 17, 1897, while Michigan was in an "airship" furore from one end of the state to the other, all hell was breaking loose in northern Texas, many hundreds of miles to the south. Several landings and contacts were reported there that night. The sightings and landings continued in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas until the end of the month. They tapered off slowly in early May.

In several landing cases from the period, the grounded objects were described as being surrounded by a strange glow and the occupants allegedly warned the witnesses not to get too close. Though some of the published descriptions are frustratingly vague, it is probable that these objects really did not resemble the celebrated "airship" but were discoid. If my theory of deception and diversion proves true, then the slight,

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# Airships: Part I

by Jerome Clark

■ ■ Jerome Clark is editor of *IUR* and vice president of CUFOS. His books include *UFOs in the 1980s* (1990) and (with J. Gordon Melton and Aidan A. Kelly) *New Age Almanac* (1991). The following article is adapted from his forthcoming *The Emergence of a Phenomenon* (Apogee Books), a study of the early years of the UFO controversy.

On March 29, 1880, the *Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican* reported an odd incident said to have occurred three days before in the tiny town of Galisteo Junction (now Lamy), New Mexico. According to the account, three men on a late-evening walk heard loud voices which they quickly learned emanated from a "large balloon" rapidly approaching from the west. As it got closer, the voices got louder, as if the speakers were shouting to attract attention. But their message was lost to the listeners, who heard a language they did not recognize. A party of sorts seemed to be going on, judging from the laughter and music emanating from the aircraft.

"The construction of the balloon was different to [sic] anything of the kind ever seen by any of the party, being in the shape of a fish," the *New Mexican* related, "and at one time was so low that fanciful characters on the outside of the car, which appeared to be very elegant, were plainly seen. The air machine appeared to be entirely under the control of the occupants, and appeared to be guided by a large fanlike apparatus. . . . The balloon was monstrous in size, and the car, as near as could be judged, contained eight or 10 persons."

As the object passed overhead, several items were tossed overboard. One, recovered almost immediately, proved to be a "magnificent flower, with a slip of exceedingly fine silk-like paper, on which were some characters resembling those on Japanese tea chests."

After a rapid ascent the craft disappeared in the eastern sky.

The next morning searchers found a cup of "very peculiar workmanship." It, along with the flower, was put on display at the local railroad depot (whose agent was one of the three witnesses). Later in the day an unnamed curiosity collector, a man who had been doing archaeological excavations at an old church in the area, purchased the items. The following evening, according to an April 5 article in the *New Mexican*, a party of tourists

arrived in town to visit the church site. In the group was a wealthy young Chinese man who immediately recognized the writing on the silk slip as a message from his fiance. The young man declared that the airship was from China, on a vanguard voyage to America; soon such traffic would be commonplace. His girl friend, a passenger on the ship, was on her way to New York, where a sister lived. Knowing he would be visiting Galisteo Junction, she had left a small present for him. "The gentleman left on last night's train for New York carrying the love token with him," the newspaper said, "and confidently expects to find his love in New York where they will be married."

A few months later, on July 29, an equally unusual story appeared in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. Early the previous evening, it was said, two Louisville men gazed out over the Ohio River to see, at some altitude, what looked to be a man surrounded by machinery which he was working with his hands and feet. At times the contraption would descend; then the man would move faster, and the object would rise. At one point he changed direction, from the southwest to the southeast. Soon the strange device flew out of sight. That evening, but an hour or two later, according to an August 6 *Courier-Journal* account, the Royster family of Madisonville, Kentucky (southwest of Louisville), observed a "circular form [which] changed to an oval. . . . [T]here seemed to be a ball at each end of the thing." It was half a mile away, low in the sky, and passed out of sight going straight south.

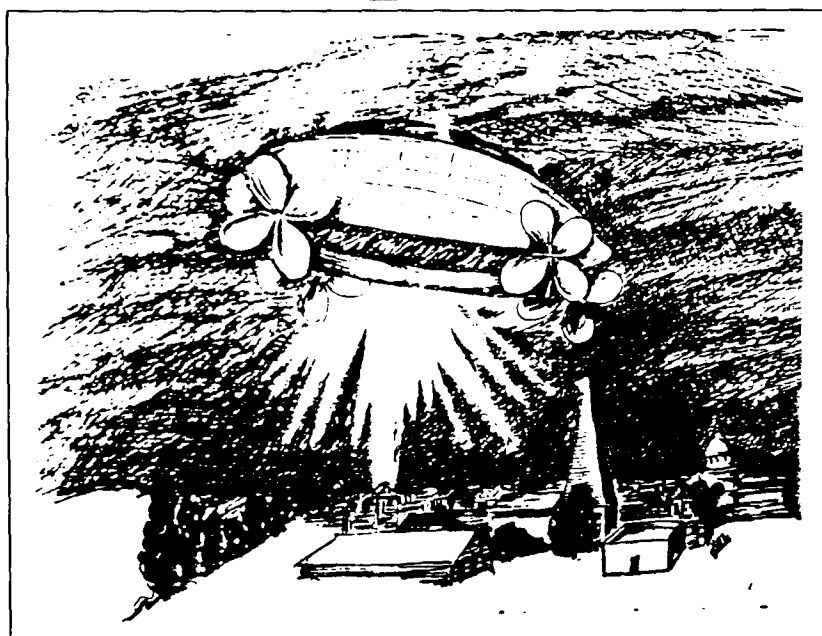
In September the New York press took note of local reports of a "flying machine operated by a man" (*New York World*, September 3) and of a "man with bat's wings and improved frog's legs . . . at least a thousand feet in the air . . . flying toward the New Jersey coast . . . [with] a cruel and determined expression" (*New York Times*, September 12).

In March 1892 accounts in the *New York Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and other newspapers detailed a furious controversy raging on the border of Russian Poland and Germany, scene of numerous sightings of mysterious "balloons." The objects, usually seen coming from the west, were thought to be carrying German spies. Observers said the vehicles appeared fully maneuverable—in other words, not subject to the vagaries of the wind, as with conventional balloons—and even able to hover for as long as 40 minutes at a time. They also carried brilliant searchlights.

These curious, and apparently isolated, stories would serve as a small preview of a much greater epic to come, one that would occupy newspapers all over the United States for six months between November 1896 and April 1897. They also exemplify the many problems a modern researcher faces in trying to make sense of early press accounts of UFO-like events. The alleged witnesses are long dead, and there is no way to determine their sincerity or the accuracy of their testimony. We do not even know in many cases if the tales are anything other than journalistic inventions.

If the European reports seem to have an air of credibility (if nothing to do with what is known of the aviation or weapons technology of the period), the New Mexican report is absurd on its face. Vehicles of the sort described in the newspaper account were not flying, or even could fly, in the America of the late 19th Century, or even of the early 20th (Cohen, 1981; Lore and Deneault, 1968). Air traffic between China and the United States was a technological impossibility. To all appearances the story is someone's idea of a joke; if so, however, it would be a joke often repeated in the years ahead.

The American publication of Jules Verne's popular *Robur the Conqueror*, a sort of airborne version of his earlier *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) in which a marvelous airship takes the place of Capt. Nemo's wondrous submarine, was seven years away when the Galisteo Junction story saw print, but by 1880 there was no shortage of popular speculation about heavier-than-air flight, which figured prominently in science-fictional adventure tales (Miller, 1987; Moskowitz, 1959). In 1862 aviation enthusiasts in France formed a society to promote research and experiments in this area, and the following year Verne became its recording secretary. In the United States inventors published designs for rigid dirigibles and powered aircraft, but what flights there were consisted of little more than short hops. In 1869, for example, Frederick Marriott of California managed to keep a winged, steam-powered dirigible aloft for one mile. In 1872 German engineer Paul Haenlein used a four-cylinder internal-combustion engine (which ran on coal gas from a supporting bag) to power a semi-rigid-frame dirigible. The following year the *New York Daily Graphic* sponsored an attempt to send a 400,000-cubic-foot balloon, with attached lifeboat, across the Atlantic Ocean, but the bag tore open as it was being inflated. On November 13, 1897, the first metal dirigible was flown successfully from Berlin, but leaking gas caused it to crash after several miles in flight. No history of aviation reports flights of large, powered dirigibles and



Artist's conception of the airship that appeared in newspapers of the era (From the files of August C. Roberts).

other aircraft over the Western United States at any time in the 19th Century, the dreams and schemes of would-be inventors notwithstanding (Berliner, 1978).

In the summer of 1896 a man looking out the door of a mail car on a train moving through Iowa saw a strange sight. He reported the incident to the *Monthly Weather Review*:

"The darkness was intense; not a ray of light was visible from any point, except from the train. When a few miles out from Princeton, and while traveling almost due north, I observed a peculiar light low down on the western horizon. It appeared to be perfectly round and about a foot in diameter, of a dull rose color, or, possibly, like a piece of live coal. When first observed it seemed to be floating within a hundred feet of the earth, but soon rose to a height about midway between the horizon and the zenith. For a time it floated very steadily, but soon began to oscillate up and down, at times even dropping out of sight behind hills. The wind was quite strong from the east, but the light traveled in an almost due north course. Its speed varied, sometimes seeming to outrun the train considerably, and at others it would fall behind, but never far enough to be lost to sight. Most of the time it appeared to be nearly abreast of the train and apparently from half a mile to a mile distant. Soon after it was first observed by me, my companion arose, and we both watched it closely until the town of Lineville, Iowa, was reached. There it passed out of sight behind the depot, and we saw it no more" (Corliss, 1982).

If this sighting had occurred a few months later—and in fact many similar sightings would be made from moving trains—the observer would probably have reported that he had seen the light of an airship.

## The California saga

The great American airship scare begins in California in the fall of 1896. On the evening of November 17, between six and seven o'clock, according to the next day's *Sacramento Evening Bee*, a light resembling an "electric arc lamp propelled by some mysterious force" passed over the city and was seen by hundreds of persons as it traveled at low altitude and, as if intelligently controlled, took evasive action as it approached buildings and hills. Some observers claimed to have gotten a good look at the object and to have heard voices. Accounts differed as to whether they were arguing about the course they were to take or "singing in a chorus, a rattling song, which gradually died away in the distance" (*San Francisco Call*, November 18). Residents of Oak Park, a Sacramento suburb, told reporters that the day before, an aerial object had circled the town at a high altitude and left a trail of smoke.

The incident sparked enormous excitement and much press comment. Rumors spread that an airship had been secretly developed in Oak Park or that one had flown in from the East Coast. There was also, however, great skepticism. The *San Francisco Chronicle* called the Sacramento airship "probably one of the greatest hoaxes . . . ever sprung on any community" but in practically the next breath acknowledged "it is hard to account for the evident sincerity of those who claim they saw the machine and heard the voices" (November 19). The next day, however, it approvingly quoted Prof. George Davidson's remark that the affair was the "outcome of a sort of free masonry of liars. Half a dozen fellows have got together, sent up a balloon with some sort of an electric light attachment, and imagination has done the rest. It is a pure fake." The *Oakland Tribune* likened the airship to the sea serpent, which "never appeared . . . when there was any dearth of whiskey. The air ship . . . cannot be verified properly without the liberal use of stimulant." To the *Woodland Mail* the airship was "about the thinnest fake yet set afloat."

The airship—or anyway "mysterious lights moving through the air at a great distance from the earth," in the *Call*'s words—made a return appearance over Sacramento on the 20th. The next afternoon, at just after five o'clock, passengers on a streetcar in Oakland saw a "peculiar-looking contrivance" high overhead. It had a headlight in front and a searchlight on the bottom. One witness said it "somewhat resembled a balloon traveling end on . . . and with what appeared to be wings both before and behind the [bottom] light" (*Call*, November 22). Earlier that afternoon a bizarre aerial phenomenon was observed near Tagus, just north of Tulare (southeast of Sacramento): an "immense sheet spread out in the air," heading northwest and seemingly against the wind. The *Call* reported that at least one sighting had occurred in early October, when a young woman riding a wheel along San Francisco's Telegraph Avenue observed a "strange-

looking object" with a powerful headlight passing overhead in a westerly direction. The next day, November 23, the newspaper published a letter from a San Rafael, California, man, William Jordon, who claimed that in late August, while hunting in the Tamalpais mountain range, he had come upon a machine shop in a secluded area. The mechanics were working on an airship and said it would soon be completed. The hunter was sworn to secrecy. Jordon may be the first person to claim an encounter with the aeronauts. He certainly would not be the last.

As the *Call* was reporting these developments, the rival *Chronicle* was headlining the claims of local attorney George D. Collins, who stated that he represented the airship inventor, a wealthy man who had come to California from Maine several years earlier. Collins was quoted as saying (though he would soon deny it) that he had seen the machine, a 150-foot metal contraption with "two canvas wings 18 feet wide and a rudder shaped like a bird's tail." Built in Oroville 60 miles away, it had flown over Sacramento and was now hidden in the San Francisco area while the inventor dealt with some technical problems. But soon he would fly the airship over the city "a dozen times," and everyone would get a good look at it. In response another San Francisco paper, the *Examiner*, sent a reporter to Oroville. He learned that the people of that city scoffed at Collins' story. "There is no wealthy man living here [Oroville] who came from Maine, or any other state, in the past seven years," the *Examiner* sneered (November 23), "and there is no one here that a diligent search can uncover who knows anything at all about a flying ship having been invented here or having left here for Sacramento."

Yet even as the ship supposedly was being repaired, reports of its passage were coming in from Sacramento and San Francisco. The object was usually seen as an "immense arc light"; dimly visible above it was a larger, dark balloon- or cigar-shaped body. At Oakland witnesses thought it was "birdlike" in appearance.

On the 24th Collins approached the *Call* to complain that the *Examiner*, which was largely skeptical of airship stories, had printed falsehoods about him and recklessly misquoted him. That day the *Examiner* had published an interview with attorney Frederick Bradley, a friend of Collins. Bradley said Collins had told him about seeing the airship housed in a barn; then its inventor boarded it and shot up into the air, as two side flaps waved like bird's wings and propelled the craft upward for 200 feet. Soon afterwards it landed easily a few feet from Collins. Collins swore this story was a lie ("Bradley must have been drinking to have imagined I told him all such rubbish," he said), that in fact he had never seen the ship but only heard about it from the inventor. The *Chronicle* (November 24) ridiculed the attorney's sudden backtracking and cited an earlier statement in which, after being asked on his "word of honor" if he had seen the airship, he had sworn he had. "Mr. Collins was evidently in a

trance at the time," the paper observed wryly.

Suspicion soon fell on itinerant dentist E. H. Benjamin, identified as a Carmel, Maine, native who spent most of his time traveling, selling pianos, and tinkering with would-be inventions. Benjamin first proved elusive, but when reporters finally caught up with him, he admitted that Collins was his attorney but that his "inventions have to do with dentistry" (*Call*, November 24). Nonetheless every time Benjamin went out in public, he was badgered with questions about the airship. Finally, sick of it all, he went into hiding, leaving behind most of his possessions. Reporters and laborers who sorted through them found nothing more exciting than copper dental fittings.

On the 24th the *Oakland Tribune* announced that a prominent citizen, George Carleton, knew the name of the inventor. He had it from a fellow Mason, "who talked with the man who saw the machine" as it was tested in the Oroville area. Carleton averred he would saw his leg off before he would break his pledge not to divulge the secret of the inventor's identity.

The following day the *Call* weighed in with even more sensational claims. W.H.H. Hart, the flamboyant former attorney general of California (he served one term), was declaring he now represented the inventor, who had fired Collins for talking too much. Yet Collins was the soul of discretion next to Hart, who seemed determined to tell all he knew (or said he knew) short of the name of the inventor, rumored now to be a Dr. Catlin, an alleged associate of Dr. Benjamin. Hart said two airships existed and his role was to "consolidate both interests." One was built in an Eastern state, and he was intimately familiar with this one, which he had seen with his own eyes. As for the California airship, he said, "I don't see any reason why [it] . . . cannot be worked. The whole trouble in the problem of aerial navigation has been a question of motive power. In this they have the right motive power . . . and that is by electrical storage batteries. . . . I propose to use [the California airship] wholly for war purposes, and within the next five or six months it will be put to the test. From what I have seen of it I have not the least doubt but [sic] that it will carry four men and 1000 pounds of dynamite." The dynamite would be dropped on the city of Havana. (In 1898 the United States and Spain would go to war, and the latter country would be forced to relinquish its Cuban colony.)

The same article quotes a secret informant's account of how recently the inventor had spent the late hours sailing from the Oroville area to Sacramento, where observers on the ground mistook engine noises for voices and music. The informant said that "about 3 o'clock in the morning [the inventor] landed in the barnyard of a farm situated in one of the bay counties. He put his airship into the barn and locked the door, for he had previously made arrangements to that end. . . . This was the very first trip of the new airship. Since then he has been out nearly every night."

In due course Hart, like Collins, moderated his claims, insisting that he had not seen the airship, only met the man "who claims to be the inventor" and seen drawings and diagrams of the craft. The alleged inventor, Hart said, "was a cousin of Mr. Linn, who was [Cuban revolutionary] Antonio Maceo's electrician." Nothing came of any of this, and soon Hart vanished from press accounts.

Nearly a century later it is impossible to judge what, if any, truth lay behind the claims he and Collins made. Conceivably they were truthfully passing on what they had been told by clients who for their part were less than honest. (Collins' and Hart's reported firsthand observations of the airships, if they are not outright lies, suggest they were the victims of an extraordinarily sophisticated hoax.) Perhaps the clients were trying to develop an airship and took advantage of publicity about unidentified airships (and of the credulity of their lawyers) to claim them as their own; if ever they existed, their own never flew. All that is clear—and all that matters for our purposes here—is that *someone* was lying.

Meanwhile reports of sightings continued up and down the state of California. Most were of nocturnal lights, and at least some of these were planets (most prominently Venus) and stars. Others were lighted kites sent aloft by pranksters. But the remainder seemed to have no apparent explanation, if one is to credit press and witness testimony. For example, on the evening of November 25, a mysterious light circled Sacramento at a rapid rate of speed. Observers included such officials as Deputy Secretary of State George A. McCalvy, District Attorney Frank D. Ryan and E. D. McCabe, the governor's personal secretary. The light shared the sky with Venus but was, according to the *Call* (November 26), "fully three times as large." Its behavior was certainly not that of an astronomical body: "When [it] first appeared it was seen moving rapidly from the northeast and heading in a southwesterly direction. As it neared the southern boundary of the city it turned directly toward the west and after passing the city went south, being distinctly visible for upwards of 20 minutes. It moved with far more rapidity than it had been seen to do in its two former visits" even though there was not a "breath of wind moving at the time." It made a second appearance later in the evening, approaching from the west and disappearing in the northeast. One witness, a Prof. Dodge, said he had seen the "outlines of a dark body" just above the light. Lt. Fred Martin of the Signal Corps stated that at four o'clock that afternoon two men told him they had just seen a rapidly moving "dark, misty object, traveling at an enormous height" in a cloudless northeastern sky.

On November 26, between 8 and 8:30 p.m., electrician Case Gilson and three other men allegedly saw an unlighted airship in the clear sky 1000 feet over Oakland. It was coming from the southeast and flying northward against the wind. Gilson told the *Oakland Tribune* (December 1) that it "looked like a great black cigar with

a fishlike tail. . . . The body was at least 100 feet long and attached to it was a triangular tail, one apex being attached to the main body. The surface of the airship looked as if it were made of aluminum, which exposure to wind and weather had turned dark. . . . The airship went at a tremendous speed. As it neared Lorin it turned quickly and disappeared in the direction of San Francisco. At half past 8 we saw it again, when it took about the same direction and disappeared." An identical object was reported over Oakland two nights later, though this time the witness, Percy Drew, said it carried a red light. About an hour earlier, in East San Jose, John Bawl and his family saw, in Bawl's words, "some bright object in the sky some 150 yards distant." As it approached the witnesses, moving in a southwesterly direction, "it was lunging from side to side, sometimes swerving sharply to one side. . . . It had a pair of wings which were constantly flapping not from side to side like a bird's, but with more of a forward and downward motion. Beneath it several feet hung a ball of red light which lit up the bottom of the ship and sent its rays far down below it. At the front was a cone-shaped projection which I surmised was a wind-break. . . . It varied in height considerably during the time I watched it. Its speed I judged to be about that of an electric car doing its best."

Just after 6:30 on the evening of December 4, travelers on a freight train between Dixon and Elmira saw two large, bright lights moving parallel to them at about 1000 feet altitude. The lights quickly outdistanced the train and disappeared in the southwestern sky.

Less credible—but characteristic of some of what was to come in the months ahead—were tales of meetings with airship inventors and crews. Among these was the yarn told by electrician John A. Horen, who informed the *Examiner* that on November 27 he met a stranger who took him to an airship hidden in a remote location some 50 miles from San Francisco. The two boarded an airship and sailed over Honolulu. When informed of her husband's story, his wife laughed, described him as a habitual practical joker, and said he had been sound asleep in his own bed during the evening in question. During the early morning hours of December 2 two fishermen near Pacific Grove supposedly saw an airship land on water and float to a beach. It turned out to have three occupants, including one addressed by the others as "captain," who explained that the ship was undergoing repairs and that, as he put it, "I am not yet ready to make my discovery known to the public, but hope to be able to do so as soon as some slight changes are made in its construction." As in other aeronaut-encounter stories which would be reported in the next months, the aeronaut's words are "quoted" extensively, as if the witnesses (in this case two Italian fishermen) were taking careful notes. The *Call* (December 5) reported the testimony of William Gordon, who said on the evening of the third he was invited aboard an airship parked a mile from Indio, then taken on a flight through southern California. The

pilot "was of swarthy appearance and spoke Spanish to the only companion he had, a woman." George Jennings, proprietor of the bar at the Grand Central Hotel in Fresno, had another kind of story to tell. Just before noon on the third, Jennings told a *Call* correspondent, a dusty traveler entered the establishment, and Jennings immediately recognized him as an "old friend whose name I cannot possibly give at present." The man, of course, was one of the airship inventors. Mechanical problems and a strong air current had brought their ship involuntarily to the area, and the man was about to embark for San Francisco for parts and assistance. "I know the man well," Jennings is quoted as saying. "He had no reason to tell me such a story if it was not true."

The reason one Col. H. G. Shaw told his story about meeting Martians is lost to history, though the account in the *Stockton Evening Mail* of November 27 mentioned that Shaw ("formerly of the *Mail* editorial staff") "is at present engaged in collecting an exhibit for the Stockton Commercial Association to be displayed at the Citrus Fair which will be held in Fresno during the coming month." Perhaps it was publicity he was seeking, or maybe he just liked a good joke. Whatever the explanation, his story is interesting because it reveals that for all the talk about American and Cuban inventors, there was an undercurrent of speculation about extraterrestrial visitors. Such notions would attain more prominence as the airship saga moved eastward, but Shaw's tale is the first explicitly to link alien beings with unidentified airships.

Shaw said he and a companion, Camille Spooner (whom the *Mail*, possibly because it was in on the joke, never sought out for confirmation), had left Lodi around six o'clock on the 25th and "were jogging along quietly when the horse stopped suddenly and gave a snort of terror. Looking up we beheld three strange beings . . . nearly or quite seven feet high and very slender." The horse was paralyzed with terror, so the two men were unable to flee the scene. In any case, the beings, who looked more or less human, gave no indication of hostile intent. Shaw walked up to them and asked where they were from. "They seemed not to understand me," he reported, "but began—well, 'warbling' expresses it better than talking. Their remarks . . . were addressed to each other, and sounded like a monotonous chant." As the beings stared at the travelers, their carriage, and the horse, Shaw observed them closely, noting small, delicate, nailless hands and long, narrow feet. When he touched one under the elbow, he found the being weighed less than an ounce.

"They were without any sort of clothing," Shaw went on, "but were covered with a natural growth . . . as soft as silk to the touch, and their skin was like velvet. Their faces and heads were without hair, the ears were very small, and the nose had the appearance of polished ivory, while the eyes were large and lustrous. The mouth, however, was small, and it seemed to me that they were without teeth. That and other things led me to believe that

they neither ate nor drank, and that life was sustained by some sort of gas. Each of them had swung under the left arm a bag to which was attached a nozzle, and every little while one or the other would place the nozzle in his mouth, at which time I heard a sound as of escaping gas." The beings, "possessed of a strange beauty," each carried an egg-sized light which, when opened, revealed an "intense but not unpleasant light."

The beings then attempted what may be the first would-be UFO abduction in history. They tried, according to Shaw, "to lift me, probably with the intention of carrying me away," but they lacked the strength to budge him or his companion. Abandoning this effort, they turned and flashed their lights toward a nearby bridge. Shaw and Spooner saw a 150-foot airship hovering 20 feet above the water. "The three walked rapidly toward the ship, but not as you or I walk," Shaw related, "but with a swaying motion, their feet only touching the ground at intervals of about 15 feet. . . . With a little spring they rose to the machine, opened a door in the side, and disappeared within." The ship then flew quickly out of sight.

Shaw concluded his account with a theory that "those we beheld were inhabitants of Mars, who have been sent to earth for the purpose of securing one of its inhabitants." With tongue presumably planted even deeper in cheek, he inveighed against "the stories being told by certain San Francisco attorneys." These are "clumsy fakes" which "should not be given credence by anyone."

San Francisco attorney Hart makes his final appearance in the January 16, 1897, issue of the *Call*, with the news that some weeks ago his client, the airship inventor, took the craft apart and shipped it, via New Orleans and Key West, to Cuba.

By the second week of December, California had begun to recover from airship fever, though sporadic sightings continued into January. On the 22nd the *Stockton Evening Mail* took note of a recent daylight sighting in Acampo, just north of Lodi. Witnesses said it "seemed as big as a small house, and looked as if it were built of canvas." Another Acampo report of the same day was of something "like a cigar box with a spark of fire in it and afterwards [it] seemed as if it was burning." Yet another sighting a few days later was reminiscent of 1880 reports of flying men. Five Acampo residents allegedly sighted an "aerial navigator [which] appeared to be a man with wings, having a fiery glow presumably from the direction of some light carried with him" (*Mail*, January 26).

## The 1897 story begins

On February 2, 1897, a dispatch from Hastings, Nebraska, published in the *Omaha Daily Bee* remarked on airship sightings in the south-central part of the state. The first sighting had occurred, it said, the previous fall, when an airship "was seen floating in the air about 500 feet

above the ground, and after standing nearly still for about 30 minutes it began to circle about and then took a northerly direction for about two miles, after which it returned to its starting place and sunk [sic] into oblivion." On February 1 the craft returned, appearing as a "large, glaring light" hovering, ascending, descending, and moving at a "most remarkable speed." On February 4 a group of 10 or 12 worshippers returning from a prayer meeting at Inavale, 40 miles south of Hastings, saw a bright light pass far overhead. Ten minutes later it was back, only this time it was much closer to the ground and the witnesses could see a cone-shaped construction 30 to 40 feet long, "with a bright headlight and six smaller lights, three on a side, and . . . two sets of wings on a side, with a large fan-shaped rudder" (*Bee*, February 6). Voices and laughter could be heard.

All that month airship stories would circulate through the state, setting the stage for the nationwide flap that would erupt in late March. Near Big Springs, in western Nebraska, on February 17, three men reported seeing a barrel-sized light abruptly rising up 300 feet and then descending rapidly and shooting out sparks. It moved across a clear sky in this fashion until it was lost to view. The *Kearney Hub* (February 18) suggested that the "now famous California airship inventor is in our vicinity," but the incident sounds more like a modern UFO report than a typical airship sighting. (The same phenomenon was reported over North Loup on March [*Nebraska State Journal*, March 16].) If we can judge from newspaper accounts, many, perhaps most, sightings were of Venus, meteors, and kites; evidently the publicity was inflaming the imaginations of the suggestible and proving irresistible to pranksters. Mostly the "airship" was observed as a large light, but viewers were more than willing to fill in the missing details. As Lincoln's *Nebraska State Journal* (February 26) remarked of witnesses who saw a south-bound light, "They were unable to tell anything about the shape of the ship back of it, but all seemed to be of the opinion that it must be the cigar-shaped vessel which was discovered at Inavale a few weeks ago." On the 26th, at 10:15 p.m., a group of persons at a railroad depot in Falls City, in the extreme southeastern part of the state, saw in the northern sky, according to dispatcher Ike Chidsey, "what appeared to be a big searchlight, moving in a westerly direction, apparently at a speed of about 60 miles an hour, and in the same portion of the sky a red light, much like a switch lamp, was plainly seen" (*Atchison [Kansas] Daily Globe*, February 27). Because it was moving in the direction of Stella, Nebraska, Chidsey wired the agent there, and he in turn reported seeing it a few minutes later. Other reports came in over the next 4 1/2 hours from Beatrice, Wymore, Hastings, Kenesaw, and Hartwell. Some of the station operators said the object had been appearing for the past several nights, but they had been reluctant to say anything about it for fear of ridicule. At 9:30 p.m. on March 14 something looking like a "big engine headlight" sailed over South Omaha



and was visible for between 30 and 40 minutes. This was its second appearance; the other had been a couple of weeks earlier. In both cases, according to the *Omaha Daily Bee* (March 16), "Nothing definite could be distinguished regarding any other part of it."

By the latter part of February strange lights were appearing in the skies of northern Kansas. At Valley Falls people thought they saw the outlines of an airship behind some moving lights. By March 28 the *Kansas City Star* was complaining about "credulous correspondents in various parts of Kansas" who were mistaking Venus, then in the northwestern sky, for an airship. No doubt some were, but Venus could not have been responsible for the object that appeared over Belleville late at night on at least two occasions late in March, moving at 75 mph and "lighting up the houses and city like an immense meteor and seem[ing] to stop a light northeast of the city, remaining almost stationary for 20 or 30 minutes, then sail[ing] rapidly up and down going northwest, then south passing below then above some scattering clouds and moving in a playful manner, finally disappearing in the distance; appearing again at 2 o'clock going south and return[ing] north about 5 o'clock in the morning" (*Topeka Daily Capital*, March 28). After a "blood-red light" appeared in the western sky over Topeka on the 27th, numerous residents looked for it to show up again the next evening but were disappointed. The *Kansas City Times* (March 29) remarked, "The only star [sic] near where the light of last night was seen was Venus, and some people who were not out last night made the assertion that the people had been fooled by that planet, that she was the only airship in sight. But there can be no truth in this assertion. The light seen last night probably may not have been an airship, but it was certainly neither a star nor a planet. The light moved parallel with the horizon and with great rapidity. Stars do not perform these feats. Neither do planets. And then when the strange light was reddest there was Venus, a short distance to the right, shining forth in all her effulgent glory. Again, when the midnight watchers caught another glimpse of the light, Venus had long before sunk to rest."

With the onset of April, airship sightings spread throughout a variety of Midwestern, Southern, and Eastern states. They were mostly over by the end of May, though reports of unidentified "balloons" continued in Canada, especially in Manitoba and British Columbia, through the summer (Bullard, 1982; Pethick, 1980). A full account would occupy a thick book. A sense of what the 1897 airship scare involved can be gained, however, from an examination of its constituent features, at least as they were reported in period newspapers (the quality of whose reporting, as we shall see, left much to be desired).

## Representative airship reports

To many observers the airship was a brilliant nocturnal light, often compared to an arc light, which moved

through the heavens at a noteworthy speed. A number of these reports are apparently of Venus or a kite. Others seem not to be. Frequently the object would appear first as a light, then at some point as a structured craft. For example, at Quincy, Illinois, late on the evening of April 10, hundreds of onlookers saw a "bright white light," with red and green lights on either side of it, flying low over the Mississippi River on the city's west side. As they watched, it rose in the air, headed east over Quincy, then south, then west. It hovered over a park for a few minutes before moving north and stopping half a mile later to hover again. It reversed direction and left in a southerly direction at "tremendous speed." The *Quincy Morning Whig* (April 11) reported, "At times it did not appear to be more than 400 or 500 feet above the ground, and in the bright moonlight was plainly silhouetted against the clear sky. Men who saw the thing describe it as a long, slender body shaped like a cigar, and made of some bright metal, perhaps aluminum, on which the moonlight glistened. On either side of the hull extending outwards and upwards were what appeared to be wings, and above the hull could be seen the misty outlines of some sort of superstructure, a clear view of which, however, was intercepted by the wings. At the front end of the thing was a headlight, and from the brightness and intensity of the stream of light thrown out it was apparently similar to the searchlights used on steamboats. About midway of the hull were small lights, a green light on the starboard or right hand side, and a red light on the port or left hand side." Estimates of its length varied from 50 feet to twice that.

Emerson, South Dakota, April 15: As it passed over town over a 15-minute period between 9 and 10 p.m., the airship appeared "cigar-shaped" with a "row of red lights along the sides" (*Sioux City [Iowa] Journal*, April 17). Cochransville, Ohio, April 19: "It was cone shaped, 180 feet long and flashed red, white and green lights from the bow" (*Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, April 20). Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 11: After observing an airship through glasses, R. G. Adams described it as "18 or 20 feet long. It was shaped like a cigar and in the middle and on top of it was a square light. This light was alternately red, green and red" (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 12). Marshfield, Wisconsin, April 10: "It seemed to assume different colors, and moved at good speed. With a glass it showed up cone shape[d] with a bright headlight" (*Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 11). Decatur, Illinois, April 11: A witness said the airship "looks like two monster cigars with three bright headlights" (*Decatur Evening Republican*, April 12). Boynton, Illinois, April 16: While taking an evening stroll around 9:30, the village blacksmith saw a cigar-shaped vessel, "about 150 feet long by 50 feet wide . . . with two large wings . . . lit up very brilliantly with different colored lights . . . a very beautiful sight" (*Delevan [Illinois] Times*, April 22). Benton Harbor, Michigan, April 11: "[I]t had the appearance of a huge ball of fire but with opera glasses leveled up on it . . . its aspect greatly changed. It threw off a variety of colored

lights of soft yellow lustre. The outline of the ship could not be seen" as it "traveled rapidly north-northwest" (*Benton Harbor Evening News*, April 12). Bay City, Michigan, April 16: As it passed 50 feet over observers, the airship was seen to be "from 50 to 75 feet long, perhaps one-third as wide. It shone with a dull red glow, as if there were lights on the upper side. In shape it was conical and no mode of propulsion was visible" (*Saginaw Courier-Herald*, April 16). Eastern Iowa, April 8: "[H]undreds of people . . . all describe it about the same way. A bright glaring headlight, revealing a glistening steel hull, dull winglike projections on either side and a hissing sound as it glides through the air" (*Chicago Record*, April 9). Grinnell, Iowa, mid-April: J. W. Lansing said, "It was early in the evening, and the ship could be seen distinctly. It was shaped like a cigar, and it moved in various directions, some of the time against a strong wind" (*Springfield [Illinois] News*, April 26). Kokomo, Indiana, April 22: "The ship soared almost directly over the town from southwest to northeast. It came in the form of a ball of light. . . . Some could distinguish the faint outline of a long cigar shaped object and something that looked like arms or wings. Others saw nothing but the light" (*Kokomo Tribune*, April 23). Toledo, Ohio, April 24: Two witnesses saw "bright lights of different colors . . . attached to a cigar shaped object" at about 500 feet altitude. "Both gentlemen agree as to the size and general shape of the airship, and say that there was nothing to indicate the use of wings or propellers" (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 28). Erie, Pennsylvania, April 21: J. S. Scheer "describes the monstrous ship as being quite long and shaped like a cigar. It had two wing-like fans on each side and a huge propeller on the stern. It also carried bright lights in the bow" (*Erie Daily Times*, April 22). Dunkirk, Ohio, April 15: "The affair looked as large as a wagon bed and had something like wings stretching from each side and a propeller at each end. On the front was a red light while on the rear was a greenish-yellow lamp" (*Kenton [Ohio] News-Republican*, April 16). Trenton, Tennessee, April 17: A "large conical mass, shaped like a cigar, was seen behind the light. Soon a red light on the right and a green light on the left became discernible" (*Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, April 18). Denton, Texas, circa April 14: An airship passed over the face of the moon, and a stargazer who watched it through powerful glasses reported "it floated about a half mile above the earth and seemed to be about 50 feet long, of a cigar shape with two great wings thrust out from each side; a broad tail or steering sail behind and a long beak or blade resembling a cutwater on a ship in front. At the point where the beak joined the main body a powerful search light threw its rays far into the night ahead, beside which even the luminosity of the moon paled. A row of windows along the side gave out similar lights" (*Dallas Morning News*, April 16). Hillsboro, Texas, April 16: "There was a brilliant light, as if coming from an arc light . . . and then

[witness J. S. Bounds] saw it gliding over a field near by. It then turned upward and he watched it until he says it must have been 1000 feet up in the air. The light appeared to him to be the headlight of some kind of a ship. . . . [T]he light went out and small ones, such as incandescent lights, appeared all around the body of the vessel" (*Austin Daily Statesman*, April 18).

## Unusual reports

Bloomington, Illinois, April 11: At 12:15 in the afternoon a resident saw, moving at a high altitude and a rapid rate of speed, a "flat-shaped" object which "looked like a big piece of yellow canvas" (*Bloomington Daily Pantagraph*, April 12). Lincoln, Illinois, April 12: At 8 p.m. more than 50 observers saw an unusual aerial vehicle pass overhead. John Fitzgerald, one of those who got a particularly good look at it, reported a large, bright headlight "in front of a V-shaped object" (*Lincoln Weekly Courier*, April 13). Mount Vernon, Illinois, April 14: "What is thought to be the mysterious airship was seen here last night by a hundred persons. Mayor [B. C.] Wells said it resembled the body of a huge man swimming through the air with an electric light on his back" (*Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, April 16). Eldridge, North Dakota, mid-April: Between 9 and 10 p.m. a local man saw a "car attached to a large kite-shaped structure above it to which were fastened large wings or planes which supported the apparatus in the air. . . . [I]t stopped and swung around. . . . At one time it was so close to him that he could hear . . . a humming which he took to be the operation of a machine. Some of the time it carried colored lights, then again it was entirely without lights" (*Jamestown [North Dakota] Weekly Alert*, April 22). Fort Wayne, Indiana, mid-April: A fast-moving, yellow-colored object in the western sky looked "pear-shaped with the apex downward," according to witness F. Crocker. R. T. Tretheway described it as "round with a V-shaped tail to it. The color of it seemed a bright yellow and strong rays of the same colored light were constantly being shot out from the main body" (*Fort Wayne Weekly Gazette*, April 15). Beaumont, Texas, April 17: At 1:30 a.m. a night watchman observed a "globular shaped thing a little dark with a bright light the size of a star at one end" as it passed at a high altitude from the southeast to the northwest (*Dallas Morning News*, April 18). Cincinnati, Ohio, May 4: Dr. Louis Dumhoff and other witnesses reported an object "moving in a zigzag course, first up, then down." It was "egg-shaped, red in color and appearing as though a portion of it was covered with a curtain, the rays escaping in the center and at each end" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 5). Norwalk, Ohio, May 10: "Newspaper accounts describe the airship as cigar shaped," one witness said, "but they are way off; at least, the one I saw is not of that shape at all, but round, like a huge ball. . . . I followed it over a mile. Part of the way it led me over a field. We were so far from the street lights that it was quite dark. . . .

. [I]t cast a shadow, which I saw distinctly and repeatedly" (*Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, May 11).

## Landings and close encounters

Western Iowa, April 4: Around 12:15 a.m. dairy farmer Dick Butler, returning home from a business trip in Sioux City, saw a glow in the cornfield near his home. The source was, according to a newspaper report, "a dark bulk through the windows of which the light shone." It looked like a "long, narrow car, resembling a corset box in shape, but perhaps 30 or 35 feet in length and six or seven in width and height. Over this car floated a cigar-shaped bag, horizontally placed, of about the same length as the car, and eight or 10 feet thick at its greatest diameter." At that moment Butler's horses bolted, and he was tossed into the ditch. By the time he was on his feet again, the object had ascended and was flying away (*Marshalltown [Iowa] Evening News-Republican*, April 9). Lake Elmo, Minnesota, April 13: Two men riding to Hudson, Wisconsin, from nearby Lakeland, Minnesota, at 11 p.m. spotted a figure in a clearing. "He walked around as if he was looking for something," Frederick Chamberlain said. When Chamberlain and his companion turned off the road to investigate, they heard a crackling sound, as if twigs and brush were being crushed, followed by an irregular "rushing noise." "A second later," Chamberlain said, "and we distinguished a long, high object of a gray white color. The thing struck me as resembling most of the top of a 'prairie schooner' or immigrant wagon covered with canvas. At the same instant we saw two rows of lights—four lights in two pairs—on each pair including a red and green light. The thing rose quickly at a sharp angle, so as to just clear the tree tops. As it passed over the trees to the south we saw several more white lights. But we could make out no machinery or wings or wheels or rudders or human figures, or even the exact outline of the affair." In the mud the witnesses found "14 footprints . . . each two feet in length, six inches wide, arranged seven on each side, and in an oblong pattern." A farmer in the area independently reported seeing a dark object with green and red lights flying overhead at about the same time (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 15). Frankfort, Indiana, April 14: A group of workers returning home from an out-of-town job in the early morning hours heard a "swishing, roaring sound" and saw green and yellow lights in a break in the clouds. A brilliant white searchlight blinded their eyes momentarily. When the men's sight had cleared, they saw a winged, cigar-shaped object descending over nearby treetops, where it hovered briefly before rising and shooting off toward the southeast, making the same noises that had brought it to the witnesses' attention in the first place (*Indianapolis Sentinel*, April 15).

In the larger context of UFO history, reports such as these are not inherently any more incredible than modern UFO reports, which they resemble to a striking degree.

What differences exist are relatively minor. In the 20th Century cigar-shaped UFOs (including ones with wings) are reported less often than discs ("flying saucers") but are nonetheless among the most commonly seen anomalous aerial phenomena. A ufologist might argue that a more significant contrast is that in our time UFOs observed nocturnally are likely to be described as luminous or glowing, whereas the 1896-97 reports have the objects carrying lights on the sides but otherwise being unilluminated; yet a close reading of 20th-Century UFO uncovers a number of little-noted sightings of silver, nonluminous objects of dirigible shape, often carrying body lights and sweeping searchlights—a subject to which we shall return presently. There are, however, other kinds of 19th-Century airship stories which figure prominently in press accounts of the period and which are difficult to square with the UFO phenomenon as it is ordinarily understood. These are reported below, in ascending order of improbability and with qualifying adverbs such as "allegedly" and "supposedly" withheld for reasons of readability. It should be stated that stories of aeronaut hearings, sightings, and meetings that are at least *obvious* jokes, satires, or hoaxes are not listed here.

## Aeronauts heard

Hawarden, Iowa, April 11: As a 60-foot-long, cone-shaped airship with four wings passed overhead at low altitude, witnesses heard "the working of machinery and the sound of human voices . . . among which was mingled the laughter of women" (*Des Moines Leader*, April 13). Jacksonville, Illinois, April 10: "Many reliable persons assert that they plainly distinguished human voices" as a long, narrow, metallic craft with a searchlight flew over the town (*Quincy [Illinois] Morning Whig*, April 11). Casstown, Ohio, April 14: From a huge, birdlike object with wings and a rudder James McKensie heard a sound like distant music and a shout from a human voice (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 16). Dunkirk, Ohio, April 15: At 4 a.m. witnesses to a passing airship, including town marshal Willis Mahon, "could hear several men . . . talking very loud, but could not distinguish what they were saying" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 16).

## Aeronauts seen

Minnetonka, Minnesota, April 11: Late in the evening a cyclist observed a "flying machine . . . shaped like an ordinary boat," with red and green lights on each side and a powerful light in front. Inside the craft were "living persons, men, women and children. They were moving about as if very busy" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, April 13). Near Birmingham, Iowa, April 14: An airship 100 feet long and 20 feet high in the center came down in a meadow almost a mile from town between 8 and 9 p.m. As witnesses raced to the scene, the craft rose with a loud whirring sound. In the moonlight two men could be seen

inside; one "carried a lantern which he waved as the ship ascended" (*Burlington [Iowa] Hawk-Eye*, April 16). Danvers, Illinois, April 16: Just after midnight an "airship" and a smaller "trailer which followed it very closely" were observed by many residents. "The ships were of some bright material and the occupants were dressed in western style" (*Bloomington [Illinois] Pantagraph*, April 17). Near Marion, Indiana, April 14: In the afternoon a cigar-shaped object with large wings appeared six miles south of the city, coming in from the northwest and veering toward the east. "Six passengers were aboard" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 15). Near Louisville, Kentucky, April 12: Just before daylight, farmer Augustus Rodgers encountered a brilliantly lighted, "huge, oblong shape" 400 feet above him. He called his wife, and the two of them watched the object, traveling at about 100 mph, disappear in the southeastern sky. "Before it vanished uncouth and enormous shadows flickered from all parts of the ship, and both Rodgers and his wife saw a form, like that of a man, standing in the front of the ship and directing its course" (*Louisville Evening Post*, April 13). Farmersville, Texas, April 15: "Two-thirds of the citizens of the city" watched a dim light approach from the northwest. As it got closer, it turned out to be a "ship or balloon." City Marshal Brown said he was within 200 feet of it and "could see two men in the ship and something resembling a large Newfoundland dog." Though he heard the passengers speaking, they were doing so in a language he did not understand (*Galveston Daily News*, April 18). Elysian, Minnesota, April 19: Just before 6 a.m. a farmer saw an airship descend in a wooded area. He ran toward it and was within a few feet of it when it abruptly ascended. There were three men inside the craft (*Mankato [Minnesota] Review*, April 20). Lyons, Nebraska, April 19: At 9:30 p.m. an airship appeared a mile above the town. It had large fans or propellers which the witnesses could hear. One observer who watched it through opera glasses saw a "large man muffled in a great coat, apparently presiding over some kind of a steering apparatus" (*Logan Valley Sun [Lyons]*, April 21).

## Aeronauts encountered

Near Peru, Nebraska, April 6: While looking for strayed cattle, James Southard became lost. At 2 a.m. he noticed a light on a bar in the Missouri River. It was from a landed airship, 200 feet long, whose crew were repairing the searchlight. The aeronauts answered all of Southard's questions. "The craft is loaded with several tons of dynamite and is bound for Cuba," where it would bomb Spanish troop camps and ships (*Auburn [Nebraska] Granger*, April 9). Near Elburn, Illinois, early April: Farmers came upon a landed airship, "made of some light substance like aluminum." Two aeronauts, who were repairing the vehicle, would not reveal much about themselves, except to say that they were crossing the

country from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic and were "following the Northwestern railway" (*Rockford [Illinois] Daily Republic*, April 12). Near Cisco, Texas, April 15: Late in the evening, seeing a light where he knew no farmhouse stood, Patrick Byrnes investigated, spotting a 200-foot airship and startling its crew members who were repairing the searchlight. "The craft is loaded with several tons of dynamite and is bound for Cuba." The airship resumed its flight at 1 a.m. (*Fort Worth Register*, April 18). Near Springfield, Illinois, April 14: At just after 9 p.m. John Halley and Adolph Wenke saw an airship land and talked with one of its occupants, a bearded scientist who stepped outside the craft. Inside, the witnesses could see another man and a woman identified as the scientist's wife. He said little about himself but remarked that "as soon as Congress recognized Cuban belligerency his air ship would be heard from" (*Springfield News*, April 15). Lexington, Kentucky, April 17: Three men taking a mid-evening stroll heard a whirring noise just as an airship descended on a vacant lot. As they rushed to the site, they encountered a 40-year-old man carrying a bucket of water from nearby springs. Declining to answer questions, the aeronaut reentered his ship and "sailed away in the direction of Richmond" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 19). Near Beaumont, Texas, mid-April: Hearing that an airship had landed at a farm two miles from town, Rabbi A. Levy went to check out the story. In the darkness he "could see very little except the outlines of the ship," 150 feet long with 100-foot wings. "I spoke to one of the men when he went into the farmer's house, and shook hands with him. . . . Yes, I did hear him say where it was built, but I can't remember the name of the place, or the name of the inventor. He said that they had been traveling a great deal, and were testing the machine. I was so dumbfounded that I could not frame an intelligent question to ask" (*New Orleans Daily Picayune*, April 25). Near Homan, Arkansas, mid-April: Jim Hooton, a railroad conductor on his way back to work after several hours' hunting, heard a sound "like the working of an air pump on a locomotive." When he investigated, he found an airship undergoing repairs. After a brief exchange the four- or five-man crew reentered the ship, "which gradually arose with a hissing sound. . . . In less time than it takes to tell you, the ship had gone out of sight" (*Arkansas Gazette*, April 22). Rockland, Texas, April 22: At 11 p.m., alerted by his barking dogs, John Barclay looked out his window to see an oblong-shaped, winged airship hovering above a pasture. The object circled a few times, then landed. Taking a Winchester with him, Barclay went outside and confronted an "ordinary mortal" who identified himself as "Smith" and who gave Barclay \$10 with which to purchase lubricating oil, two cold chisels, and bluestone. He would not permit Barclay to approach the ship. When the witness returned with the requested materials, before departing the aeronaut would say only that he was from "anywhere," adding that "we will be in

Greece tomorrow" (*Houston Daily Post*, April 25). Near Chattanooga, Tennessee, April 24: An airship in need of repairs landed on the spur of a mountain. Several witnesses spoke with its two occupants, one of whom identified himself as Prof. Charles Davidson. Davidson said he had left Sacramento a month earlier and was touring the country (*Paducah [Kentucky] Daily News*, April 26). Near Hot Springs, Arkansas, May 6: During a rainstorm two law-enforcement officers saw a light in the sky come down behind a hill half a mile away. After seeing two persons carrying lights, they drew their rifles and demanded to know who was there. A man with a long beard said he, a young man, and a young woman were traveling around the country in an airship, which was clearly visible behind him, as were the two other aeronauts, and they hoped to end up in Nashville at the end of their trip. He invited the officers (as they put it in a subsequent sworn statement) to "take a ride, saying that he could take us where it was not raining. We told him we preferred to get wet." The officers, who were searching for a suspect, left. Forty minutes later, on their return to the site, the airship was gone (*Helena [Arkansas] Weekly World*, May 13).

## The mysterious Mr. Wilson

One of the especially curious aspects of the airship affair concerns several separate reports, all but one from Texas, involving an aeronaut named Wilson. Someone who may be Wilson first appears in a letter published in the *Dallas Morning News* for April 19. The correspondent, C. G. Williams of Greenville, reported that at midnight on April 16, as he was taking a walk two miles south of town, he saw a brilliant light in front of him. The light went out, revealing an "immense cigar-shaped vessel" illuminated by the light of the moon. Three men emerged from the landed craft. Two went to work on the ship, and the third approached Williams, asking if he would mail some letters but "not disclose the names and addresses." "Having been at one time connected with a daily paper, and by mere reportorial instinct I took out my pencil and paper," Williams wrote, and recorded the conversation that followed. Saying that the airship ran by "electricity," the aeronaut claimed he had perfected his ship after many years of work "at a little town in the interior of New York state." After a few minutes the aeronauts boarded the craft and flew away, and Williams went to Greenville to send off the letters.

On May 16 the *Morning News* published another letter, this one said to have been sent to Dr. D. H. Tucker from a young friend who not long afterwards perished in Grenada, Mississippi, while trying to rescue livestock from a flood. The letter, dated April 20, was sent from Lake Charles, Louisiana. The writer claimed that the day before, around noon, "while driving across country in a leisurely trot," he observed an airship coming in his direction. Half a mile from him the airship let loose with

an "unearthly whistle" which terrified his horses, causing him to be thrown from the buggy. As the horses fled, the ship landed, a rope came down, and two men rushed over to apologize and to inquire after his well-being. The young man was invited into the airship, where he was introduced to two other crew members, a Mr. Waters and a "Mexican or Spaniard, who did the cooking, I suppose." The two whom he first encountered were "Mr. Wilson, the owner, and Mr. Scott Warren, his friend." When the young man asked if the ship ran by electricity, Wilson "said this was not the case, but that it was propelled and sustained by a gas. . . . I learned that Mr. Wilson (though I doubt if that is his correct name) formerly lived in Fort Worth, but I do not remember to have ever seen him. He is apparently a young man and has the typical face of a genius or an inventor." A number of ships "had been built according to plans at different places and had been put together at Mr. Warren's place, but he did not say where that was. . . . The inventor said that as soon as he could demonstrate satisfactorily the practicability of economically and safely operating his ship she and some capitalists would construct a line of air ships to be operated between New York and San Francisco and other points. . . ."

At 11 p.m. that same day, near Beaumont, Texas, 60 miles west of Lake Charles, J. R. Ligon and his son Charley noticed lights in a neighbor's pasture and went to investigate. They found "four men moving around a large dark object" which turned out to be an airship. The aeronauts asked for water. "They came to my house, each bringing two buckets. After filling them, they started to return. I accosted one of the men and he told me his name was Wilson and that he and his companions were traveling in a flying machine. They were returning from a trip out on the Gulf and were now headed toward Iowa, where the airship was built" (*Houston Daily Post*, April 21). Ligon followed them to the ship, which proved to be an enormous craft 136 feet long and 20 feet wide. It had four large wings and was steered by propellers attached to the bow and stern. The entire apparatus was powered, Ligon was informed, by electricity. Wilson said it was one of five built in a small Iowa town.

It is tempting to link this story with the one told in New Orleans by Rabbi Levy of Beaumont (see above), despite some small discrepancies. Levy places his encounter late in the evening on a farm not far from the city limits and mentions "immense wings"—not, apparently, a single wing—on either side of the craft. His estimate of a 150-foot length is close enough to Ligon's (perhaps suspiciously precise) 136 feet, and Levy has the aeronauts entering the farmer's house to get water. Both Levy and Ligon have the aeronauts saying the ship was run by "electricity." In his April 24 interview with a *Daily Picayune* reporter, Levy states that his experience took place "about ten days ago"—in other words, five days earlier than Ligon's—but he also mentions that "the whole country around was aroused by a report that the

airship had been seen and that it had alighted on a farm near by." There is no press mention of a Beaumont-area landing on or around the 14th; the closest such report is Ligon's on the 19th.

Twenty-three hours after Ligon's encounter, at Uvalde (over 300 miles southwest of Beaumont as the airship flies), Sheriff H. W. Baylor conversed for a short time with the three-man crew of an airship which had alighted close to town. One of the aeronauts gave his name as Wilson and his hometown as Goshen, New York. He inquired about a Capt. C. C. Akers, whom he said he had known in Fort Worth and who he understood lived in the area. Told that Akers now worked as a customs officer in Eagle Pass but that he frequently visited Uvalde, Wilson asked to be remembered to him. The crew reentered the ship and flew away. County Clerk Henry J. Bowles saw the object as it passed up Getty Street north of the Baylor residence (*Houston Daily Post*, April 21). When contacted by the *Galveston Daily News* (April 28), Akers stated, "I can say that while living in Fort Worth in '76 and '77 I was well acquainted with a man by the name of Wilson from New York state and was on very friendly terms with him. He was of a mechanical turn of mind and was then working on aerial navigation and something that would astonish the world. He was a finely educated man, then about 24 years of age, and seemed to have money with which to prosecute his investigations, devoting his whole time to them. From conversations we had in Fort Worth, I think that Mr. Wilson, having succeeded in constructing a practical airship, would probably hunt me up to show me that he was not so wild in his claims as I then supposed. . . . I will say further that I have known Sheriff Baylor for many years and know that any statement he may make can be relied upon as exactly correct."

On the 22nd, at midnight, Frank Nichols, a farmer living two miles east of Jossierand (approximately 75 miles northwest of Beaumont), was awakened by a "whirring noise." Looking out the window, he saw a huge, brilliantly lighted vessel in his cornfield. He got out of bed and went out for a closer look. Before he got to the airship, however, two men with buckets asked him if they could draw some water from his well. Nichols consented and in return was invited to examine the ship. The craft had a six- or eight-man crew, and its motive power was "highly condensed electricity." One of the crew remarked that five such ships had been built in an Iowa village, from which an immense stock company was being formed. The airships would be in general use within the area (*Houston Daily Post*, April 26).

The next night, at Kountze (20 miles northwest of Beaumont), an airship came down for repairs. The first witnesses were Capt. H. A. Hooks and A. W. Hodges. The aeronauts, who introduced themselves as Wilson and Jackson, said they would have to stay over for several days for repairs. "Any one wishing to see it," the *Houston Daily Post* reported (April 25), "may do so by coming to

Kountze any time before Monday night [the 26th], as it will take until then to get it in flying order." The ship was estimated to be 50 feet long and 20 feet wide.

At eight o'clock in the evening on or about April 28, according to a letter he wrote to the *Houston Daily Post* (April 30), H. C. Legrone of Deadwood, Texas (130 miles directly north of Beaumont), heard a disturbance among his horses. When he stepped outside, he saw a fast-moving, brilliant, multicolored light heading toward him from the southwest. It slowed and hovered for several minutes, then descended on a nearby field. "I, by this time, having recognized it as the airship, went directly to the place of landing, and on arrival found the ship of about the same make up as given by various correspondents. Its crew was composed of five men, three of whom entertained me, while the other two took rubber bags and went for a supply of water at my well, 100 yards off. They informed me that this was one of five ships that had been traveling the country over recently; and that this individual ship was the same one recently landed near Beaumont, in the State, after having traveled pretty well all over the Northwest. They stated that these ships were put up in an interior town in Illinois. They were rather reticent about giving out information in regards to the ship, manufacture, etc., since they had not yet secured everything by patent, but stated they would soon be secure in this, and expected to establish a factory in St. Louis at an early age and would at once enter into active competition with the railroads for passenger traffic; especially in transcontinental travel. They stated that they could shorten time from Atlantic to Pacific two to three days."

On April 26 the *San Antonio Daily Express* reported that between midnight and 1 a.m. the previous night, an airship passed over the city. The same article stated matter-of-factly, citing no source, "The inventors were Hiram Wilson, a native of New York and son of Willard H. Wilson, assistant master mechanic of the New York Central Railroad, and a young engineer, C. J. Walsh of San Francisco. The men had labored on their project for several years, and when their plans were matured they had the parts of the ship constructed to order in different sections of the country, whence they were shipped to the rendezvous at San Francisco and put together on the island. After some experimental navigation to California an attempt was apparently made to cross the continent and the ship was traced as far east as Utah, after which nothing was heard of it for months. The most plausible theory of the sudden disappearance of the ship is that some defects were developed and that a rendezvous was made in some out of the way section of the west until changes could be effected. It is believed that the present trip of the machine is for further experimental purposes."

Both the similarities and the differences in the Wilson stories will be apparent even to the casual reader. Another, perhaps less immediately obvious difficulty confronting those inclined to take these accounts literally



has to do with the physical appearance of Wilson himself. Akers has him "about 24 years of age" in 1877; yet at Lake Charles 20 years later, when this Wilson should have been well into middle age, he is described as "apparently a young man." In 1980 Daniel Cohen could find no evidence that an inventor or mechanic named Wilson, Hiram or otherwise, had ever lived in Goshen, New York (Cohen, *op. cit.*).

## Aeronauts or astronauts?

Throughout the airship scare newspapers everywhere were filled with claims and speculations about the airship inventor, and numerous hoax messages, allegedly dropped by inventors from their passing ships, contributed to the excitement. It is true that all across America ambitious tinkers were working on devices which they hoped would become functioning heavier-than-air craft. On August 11, 1896, the U.S. Patent Office gave an airship patent to C. A. Smith of San Francisco and on April 20, 1897, another to Henry Heintz of Elkton, South Dakota, but neither of these craft ever flew (Lore and Deneault, *op. cit.*).

Though press treatment of the airship mystery overwhelmingly assumed its terrestrial (and usually American) origin, there was also talk of extraterrestrial visitation. More than that, there were reports of otherworldly visitors. Some, again, were obvious jokes. Others were printed, at least ostensibly (and at times only initially), as serious stories. Some examples of these:

Near Reynolds, Michigan, April 14: At 4:30 a.m. a "flying machine" came down half a mile southwest of the town. A dozen farmers who had watched it maneuvering overhead rushed to the site. Inside the craft was a giant, manlike figure, 9 1/2 feet tall, whose "talk, while musical, is not talk at all, but seems to be repetition of bellowing." Though what looked like the pelts of polar bears were visible, the giant "seemed to have no use for them, as he was almost naked and seemed to be suffering from the heat." One brave or foolish farmer who tried to approach the being was kicked severely enough to cause a broken hip. "Great excitement prevails here, and lots of people are flocking here from Morley and Howard City to view the strange being from a distance, as no one dares to go near. He seems to be trying to talk to the people" (*Saginaw Courier-Herald*, April 17).

Near Linn Grove, Iowa, April 15: A large airship passed slowly over the town, heading north, and five men followed it four miles into the country, where it landed. But when the pursuers got within 700 yards of the vessel, it spread out four massive wings and flew away. The occupants tossed out two boulders "of unknown composition." According to witnesses, the beings had extraordinarily long beards and were "queer-looking," making "desperate efforts to conceal themselves" (*Indianapolis Journal*, April 17).

Near Springfield, Missouri, April 16: While wander-

ing through hills east of town. W. H. Hopkins spotted a landed airship in a clearing. Next to it was the "most beautiful being I ever beheld," a nude young woman with hair falling to her waist. As she plucked flowers, she spoke, with a lovely, musical voice, in a foreign language, all the while fanning herself even though it was a cool day. In the shade cast by the ship, a naked man with shoulder-length hair and a beard as long as the woman's hair lay, also fanning himself. After some minutes Hopkins approached the woman who, when she saw him, shrieked and ran to the man's arms. Hopkins tried to tell them he meant no harm, but they did not understand his words. Eventually the two aeronauts relaxed, and communication of sorts was established. Asked where they came from, they "pointed upwards, pronouncing a word which, to my imagination, sounded like Mars." The two examined him "with the greatest curiosity. . . . They felt of my clothing, looked at my gray hair with surprise and examined my watch with the greatest wonder." Hopkins was shown the interior of the ship, which soon flew away, the two occupants "laughing and waving their hands to me, she a vision of loveliness and he of manly vigor" (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 19).

Merkel, Texas, April 23: In the evening, as local people were returning from a church service, they saw a heavy anchor-shaped object being dragged by a large rope which was attached to an airship in the sky not far above them. After 10 minutes a small figure dressed in a blue sailor suit started down the rope but, when he saw that he was being observed, cut the rope below him and returned to the ship, which sailed off toward the northeast. "The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliott and Miller, and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people" (*Houston Daily Post*, April 28).

Near Cassville, Indiana, May 3: While riding home at 1 a.m., Edwin Shaffer passed a gravel pit in which sat a cigar-shaped, 40-foot airship. It was "handsomely furnished on the inside and the aerial craft was inhabited by a crew of foreign-tongued midgets who spoke no English" (*Kokomo [Indiana] Daily Tribune*, May 4).

A typical expression of the extraterrestrial hypothesis, 1897 version, appeared as a letter to the editor of a Tennessee newspaper. Adam Oldham wrote:

"Scientists assert that the inhabitants of Mars have superior intelligence to our people, and must have made far greater progress in the sciences. They report that the Martians have been signalling the earth with electrical lights for more than a year. An air machine can only be driven by electricity, and such a machine after penetrating the thin atmosphere of Mars, could travel through the airless space with the speed of electricity, which is 300,000 miles a second [sic], until it reached the envelope of our heavier atmosphere. . . . The airship could easily be stored with compressed air to last the travelers for a much longer journey than from Mars to this earth. The visitors, no doubt provisioned for months, evidently fear to land among strange peoples who may be barba-



rous in their view, and therefore seem to be reconnoitering, and examining the country here and there before landing. . . . I predict that the air ship will be seen many times and in many places, before a landing is finally made. I suggest that our visitors be informed that a friendly welcome awaits them. . . . The Smithsonian Institution at Washington should take the matter in hand at once. The air ship has been seen by too many creditable witnesses living far apart for it to be pronounced a sensational hoax" (*Clarksville Daily Leaf-Chronicle*, April 17).

### 19th-Century airships, 20th-Century views

By the summer of 1897 the airship scare was largely forgotten, and printed references to it afterwards are surprisingly rare. The first reassessment of even part of the story appeared in 1938, in an article by Rudolph Umland in the University of Nebraska's literary magazine *Prairie Schooner*. Umland dealt extensively with Nebraska reports. Though he did not take the affair entirely seriously, his article is a full and accurate account of what it involved.

The first book to mention the airship scare of the late 19th Century was Charles Fort's *New Lands* (1923). Chapter 28 devotes 2 1/2 pages to the subject, citing several of the more dramatic reports, including an April 19 visitation at Sistersville, West Virginia, where an observer looking through glasses noted, according to the *New York Herald* of the following day, a "huge cone-shaped arrangement 180 feet long, with large fins on either side." Fort also takes note of astronomers' efforts to explain the sightings (as Venus, which did inspire many "airship" reports) and the abundant hoaxes. In common with many who later would try to make sense of the affair, Fort threw up his hands. "Against such an alliance as this, between the jokers and the astronomers," he wrote, "I see small chance for our data," adding these prophetic words: "The chance is in the future. If, in April, 1897, extra-mundane voyagers did visit this earth, likely enough they will visit again, and then the alliance against the data may be guarded against."

It would be 27 years (if one does not count the omnibus *Books of Charles Fort* [1941]) before airships would reappear between book covers. Drawing, apparently, on Fort (who goes uncredited), Donald Keyhoe, in his paperback *The Flying Saucers Are Real* (1950), summarizes the episode in three short paragraphs on page 60 but manages nonetheless both to give a misleading impression and to make at least two false statements. He refers to nonexistent sightings by astronomers who viewed airships through telescopes, and he also has witnesses reporting "short" or "stubby" wings when in fact (or, anyway, in allegation) they almost invariably characterized the wings as "large" or even "magnificent." (In his imaginative retelling of the sighting at "Sister-

ville" [sic], he invents stubby wings in defiance of contemporary statements to the contrary.) Keyhoe does not mention the hoaxes, the supposed landings and contacts with "ordinary mortals," and the claims about inventors—the elements that Fort acknowledged confounded any immediately obvious interpretation involving extraterrestrial visitors.

The first UFO-age writer to publish original research on turn-of-the-century reports was Harvard University astronomer Donald H. Menzel, author of the first debunking book, *Flying Saucers* (1953). Chapter 6, "The Flying-Saucer Scare of 1897," is based on news stories, most quoted verbatim, that appeared in the *Oakland Tribune* and the *New York Herald*. Menzel noted the large number of hoaxes and wild rumors but added, perhaps surprisingly, "A few of the reported incidents probably referred to true flying saucers." Menzel's treatment is marred only by his assertion that Thomas Edison's April 19 dismissal of the airship phenomenon "broke the airship bubble" and "killed the sensation." As we have seen, sightings and news reports continued for almost another month. (Among other things Edison said, "I prefer to devote my time to objects which have some commercial value. At best airships would be only toys.")

Between Menzel's book, whose perceptive coverage unfortunately was largely ignored (owing no doubt to most UFO writers' hostility to this outspoken UFO foe), and 1964, little further original research was conducted into 1896-97 newspapers; a rare exception was the reprinting, in the Spring 1957 issue of Max B. Miller's *Saucers*, of a number of accounts collected by ufologist Zan Overall from 1896 and 1897 issues of the *Los Angeles Times*. But as a rule the airship scare was mentioned only in passing in UFO books by authors who seemed to know no more than what Fort had reported, though his cautionary remarks were never quoted. One of the most important mentions of the 1897 events is in Jacques Vallee's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* (1965). Vallee's treat is brief and unsatisfactory—he twice mentions, as "the first landing of a classical 'flying saucer,'" a Carlinville, Illinois, story which is an almost certain hoax (Neeley, n.d.)—but where 1897 reports are concerned, *Anatomy* is best remembered for introducing the UFO community to rancher Alex Hamilton's tale, originally published in a Kansas newspaper (*Yates Center Farmer's Advocate*, April 23), of the rustling of a calf by alien beings in an airship. The yarn subsequently made repeated appearances in the UFO literature over the next 12 years, and even beyond (Sachs, 1980). Eventually it was exposed as a tall tale concocted by Hamilton, the newspaper editor, and members of a local liars' club (Clark, 1977; Rickard, 1977). Several years later folklorist Thomas E. Bullard would discover that Hamilton himself had admitted, when a Missouri newspaper editor asked him about the story shortly after it was supposed to have occurred, "I lied about it" (*Atchison County Mail*, May 7; Bullard, 1982).

Ufologists' perceptions of the airship story began to change as soon as the first systematic examinations of 1896-97 newspaper accounts commenced. Initial research was conducted in 1964 by Jerome Clark, who not long afterwards reported to the UFO community that matters were more complicated than Keyhoe and subsequent writers had indicated. Among landing and occupant cases, for example, "we find a number of major differences between the older [1897] and the newer [post-World War II] stories," Clark remarked, adding that these "may prove highly significant." He noted the Springfield, Illinois, encounter claimed by Adolph Winkle and John Hulle (Wenke and Halley in other accounts; see above), who reported meeting aeronauts who identified themselves as inventors on their way to Cuba (Clark, 1965). (A later investigator, Robert G. Neeley, Jr., was unable to find any evidence that the two men, however their names were spelled, ever existed [Neeley, *op. cit.*].) In a longer follow-up article Clark suggested that UFOs are a phenomenon whose true nature is unknowable but which is experienced as something that conforms to witnesses' cultural expectations; in other words, before the 19th Century people observed "gods and wizards. . . . Today, in the 'Space Age,' we are led to believe that 'flying saucers' are spacecraft. In April 1897, then—six and a half years before Kitty Hawk—what more logical than a terrestrial aircraft?" (Clark, 1966).

These arguments were considerably expanded in Vallee's *Passport to Magonia* (1969), the first major book, other than those by debunkers such as Menzel and Lawrence J. Tacker (author of the forgotten *Flying Saucers and the U.S. Air Force* [1960]), to reject the extraterrestrial hypothesis then dominant in world ufology. Vallee argued that "flying saucers" are but an ancient paranormal intelligence in disguise; previous disguises included fairy and demonic manifestations as well as 19th-Century aeronauts. Particularly revealing in this connection, he suggested, were parallels between the Merkel, Texas, story (see above) and the following story, recorded by Gervase of Tilbury (A.D. 1150-1235) in part three of his *Otia Imperialia* (1211):

"There happened in the borough of Cloera, one Sunday, while the people were at Mass, a marvel. In this town is a church dedicated to St. Kinarus. It befell that an anchor was dropped from the sky, with a rope attached to it, and one of the flukes caught in the arch above the church door. The people rushed out of the church and saw in the sky a ship with men on board, floating before the anchor cable, and they saw a man leap overboard and jump down to the anchor, as if to release it. He looked as if he were swimming in water. The folk rushed up and tried to seize him; but the Bishop forbade the people to hold the man, for it might kill him, he said. The man was freed, and hurried up to the ship, where the crew cut the rope and the ship sailed out of sight. But the anchor is in the church, and has been there ever since, as a testimony."

This oddly compelling tale led even so cautious a scholar as the prominent British folklorist Katharine Briggs to remark, "This strange early space-men story . . . shows some glimmering of scientific knowledge about the relative density of the air near the earth. It is one of those strange, unmotivated and therefore rather convincing tales that are scattered through the early chronicles" (Briggs, 1977). Nonetheless there is nothing eerie or significant about the apparent repetition in small-town Texas centuries later. It is now known that Gervase's account was reprinted in American newspapers in the spring of 1897 (see, for example, the *Taylorville* [Illinois] *Daily Breeze*, April 17), providing the hoaxer (probably the author of the *Houston Daily Post* story) with a model from which he or she deviated only slightly (even identifying the witnesses as worshippers leaving a church) in producing an 1897 version.

(On the other hand, Hopkins' tale of an encounter with a Martian Adam and Eve is conceivably not a hoax but a hallucinatory or visionary experience. Though it was not rediscovered until the 1970s, it corresponds strikingly to an obscure 1950 contact story told by an uneducated Centralia, Washington, man who claimed—those who interviewed him thought sincerely—to have met unclad space people from an Edenic Venus [Clark, 1981].)

In *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* (1970) John A. Keel wrote that the events of 1896 and 1897 were part of a "grand deception" carried out by sinister beings he calls "ultraterrestrials"—entities from another order of reality—who, not wanting us "even to know that they existed," elected to "construct a few craft that at least resembled dirigibles and make sure that they were seen in several places by many people, such as Chicago." They also staged landings "in relatively remote places and [contacted] a few random individuals, telling them the 'secret invention' story" so that they could "spread the word. . . . To lend further confusion to the situation, some of the contactees would be told ridiculous things which would discredit not only them but the whole mystery. Knowing how we think and how we search for consistencies, the ultraterrestrials were careful to sow inconsistencies in their wake." The inventor with whom George Collins and W.H.H. Hart dealt in San Francisco was actually an ultraterrestrial, according to Keel.

Not many ufologists or other probers into the airship mystery have been willing to embrace speculations as radical as these, or as far removed from anything that could be empirically validated. In fact, as research continued and more came to be known about the period, caution mounted and at times shaded into outright skepticism. UFO historian Loren E. Gross produced two conservative monographs, *The UFO Wave of 1896* (1974) and *Charles Fort, the Fortean Society and Unidentified Flying Objects* (1976), dealing in whole or in part with the period. By the mid- to late 1970s it was becoming increasingly evident that hoaxes played a far more

prominent role than anyone had imagined. Particularly telling was the revelation that the Hamilton calfnapping story was fictitious, in spite of published affidavits from prominent citizens attesting that "for truth and veracity we have never heard his word questioned." After that researchers were never able to take entirely seriously comparable endorsements appended to other, equally extraordinary airship reports. They learned, for example, that the Linn Grove, Iowa, landing never happened, according to the testimony of a man who lived there in 1897 (Lundt, 1973). The crash of an airship, with alien occupant, in Aurora, Texas, was concocted by a local correspondent for the *Dallas Morning News* (Simmons, 1985). The Merkel airship-and-anchor yarn, which had seemed as interesting and as suggestive as Hamilton's story, was declared a hoax by Neeley in the late 1970s (Neeley, *op. cit.*).

Soon it appeared that any landing-occupant case that could be investigated could also be counted on to disintegrate under scrutiny. Most airship investigators concluded that such stories were probably concocted in editorial offices or by jokesters in outlying districts. (Papers of the period published letters from outraged small-town readers who complained they were falsely identified as witnesses to airship activity. For example, J. H. Tibbles of Rochelle, Illinois, wrote the *Chicago Record* [April 10] that a report in a Chicago paper notwithstanding, no one in Rochelle had seen an airship on April 3; "I took it upon myself to hunt down the report, and for several days I have been busy doing so. . . . I have not [even] found a person who had seen another who claimed to have seen it.") Many of the stories, even those that to 20th-Century eyes look serious, may have been published with a nudge and a wink to the readers. After residents of Waterloo, Iowa, built a bogus airship on a property ordinarily used by a traveling circus, hired a practical joker from another town to pose as its pilot, "Prof. Jourgensen," and for a time fooled both tourists and area newspapers, the *Fort Dodge Messenger* praised Waterloo for pulling off the "biggest, yet best joke of all. . . . American people delight in being humbugged." To many Americans, including editors and reporters, the airship story was played or taken largely for its laugh value; the facts, or what facts there were, were a secondary priority, if even that.

By the time the first full-length book, Daniel Cohen's *The Great Airship Mystery* (1981), was published, even nonlanding reports were coming under suspicion. In common with other writers over the next decade (Arts, 1990; Bartholomew, 1990; Chariton, 1991; Miller, *op. cit.*), Cohen treated the airship scare less as a UFO wave than a peculiar moment in the history of popular culture. He linked it to Americans' fascination with aviation developments, proto-science-fiction tales of marvelous flying machines, and tension between the United States and Spain over Cuba. He concluded that airship reports could be explained as hoaxes and misidentifications,

though he confessed to a "nagging feeling that *all* of these people could not have been mistaken or lying"; yet "there is not a single piece of tangible evidence to support any story."

The next year, in the introduction to his self-published compilation of hundreds of newspaper stories from the period, *The Airship File*, Thomas E. Bullard remarked on "how seldom airship reports turned up in the columns devoted to news from outlying communities. The content of this correspondence includes sicknesses, births, deaths, marriages, crop news, and mention of anything new or changing in these areas where newness or change was rare. A crime was a major event, and an airship sighting would surely rate a mention. After reading about a lot of Sunday picnics, weekend visits and fine hunting dogs, I can say with safety that those mentions are lacking." Bullard is implying that regular provincial correspondents were more likely to be trustworthy and thus less likely to tell sensationalistic airship yarns. In cases where featured dispatches were filed concerning local events (outside, in other words, the "area happenings" columns), the authors may not always have been true locals; they may have been urban newspaper staff writers who put phony datelines in front of phony stories. One possible exception to Bullard's dictum may be a cryptic sentence published in the "Holloway Items" column of a small western Minnesota newspaper, the *Appleton Press*, on June 1, 1898, fully a year after the airship hysteria had subsided (at least for a time): "Several strange objects have been observed floating through the atmosphere in this vicinity of late." The paper provided no more details, unfortunately. Could these have been belated airship sightings?

## What happened?

Any effort to uncover the truth about the late-19th-Century airship scare comes up against some unhappy realities: Newspaper coverage was unreliable; no independent investigators ("airshipologists") spoke directly with alleged witnesses or attempted to verify or debunk their testimony; and, with a single unsatisfactory exception, no eyewitness was ever interviewed even in the 1950s, when some presumably were still living. The sole exception was a retired *San Francisco Chronicle* employee with whom Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, then head of Project Blue Book, had a long phone conversation in 1952. Ruppelt, who died in 1960, wrote only, "He had been a copy boy at the time and remembered the incident, but time had canceled out the details. He did tell me that he, the editor of the paper, and the news staff had seen 'the ship,' as he referred to the UFO. His story, even though it was 56 years old, smacked of others I'd heard when he said that no one at the newspaper ever told anyone what they had seen; they didn't want people to think that they were 'crazy'" (Ruppelt, 1956).

In 1952 the Los Angeles-based Civilian Saucer

Investigation (CSI) invited UFO witnesses to report their sightings. Among the letters CSI received, it later noted, "was a good sprinkling of sightings extending through the 30s and several . . . sightings as early as 1896 [and] 1898" (Williams, 1952). Unfortunately, if those letters still exist, their whereabouts are unknown. In 1990 *Fate* published a letter from a reader who said her late mother, Hilda Stoll Wallace, had seen an airship near Beatrice, Nebraska, in 1897. She "was a child of nine at the time," Audrey M. Wagner wrote. "I have heard her tell many times of the strange air ship (cigar shaped) that she and her family witnessed as it passed slowly over their farm" (Wagner, 1990b). When asked for further details, Wagner stated she could remember only that her mother had said the object "was similar to dirigibles and was silver in color" (Wagner, 1990a).

It is safe to assume that there were no airship inventors flying over America in 1896 and 1897. It is wise to be skeptical of newspaper accounts of meetings with aeronauts, even as it is forgivable to be intrigued by the suggestion of a link between J. R. Ligon's story and Rabbi Levy's. If *this* aeronaut encounter happened, could not others have? Since that prospect opens up a bottomless pit of philosophical difficulties (forcing us, on what is at best vaguely suggestive evidence, to imagine a nearby parallel universe—with an aviation history slightly at variance with ours—confusing its affairs with our own), surely the answer to the question is no; surely there is a much less interesting (and sanity-preserving) explanation which does not require us to believe that anyone ever *really* met an 1897 aeronaut. In the one other genuinely interesting aeronaut encounter, the one at Uvalde, Texas, it is easy to speculate, if we do not allow the absence of evidence to stop us, that Capt. Akers and the "witness" Sheriff Baylor conspired to fashion a hoax or joke.

At the same time it must be said that, amid all the misperceptions, exaggerations, and fabrications, UFOs—and UFOs of a modern variety—*were* observed; once in a while they even touched briefly on the ground (as in the Lake Elmo, Minnesota, incident, a story that has at least the appearance of credibility). We have already noted reports of unambiguously post-Arnold unidentified flying objects amid the airships: V shapes, barrels, globes, eggs, pears, and fast-moving nocturnal lights. But what were the "airships"?

## Airships through 1946

Airship scares did not end in 1897. Sightings continued sporadically until 1909, when waves erupted in Great Britain, the East Coast of the United States, and New Zealand, with a few sightings spilling over into neighboring Australia, and in 1912 and 1913 the wave returned to Britain. Note that these events occurred, and were recorded, in areas outside the western half of America. In other words, these press accounts were not filtered

through what may be described as a tradition of American frontier humor. Though the American frontier had been pronounced closed in 1890, for those who lived west of the Missouri River it was, for everybody but recent immigrants and small children, a vivid memory, and the kind of rough folk joking that expressed itself in boasting and yarn-spinning was very much alive even in Ohio and Illinois, and it had much to do with the wild-and-woolly press treatment of airship sightings as well as other matters.

Elsewhere newspaper readers expected to be able to believe, within reason, what they read in their newspapers. That may explain why these early-20th-Century newspaper stories are more restrained and why they present a more credible picture of what "airships" may have been. There are no stories of contacts with airship occupants, human or otherwise, though there are a few reports of occupants (usually described as humanlike) glimpsed through windows of passing airships. The airships are typically said to resemble dirigibles, torpedoes, cigars, and boats. (There is also a 1909 report, from Onslow, Western Australia, of what may be a daylight disc; at least that is one way of interpreting the witness' description of the "airship": "It looked compact, like a dirigible balloon, but appeared to be squarer and more like an aeroplane. The sun shone on it, and flashes came from it, as though reflected from something revolving, or from metal work." There is no shortage, either, of modern-sounding nocturnal lights.) There are fewer reports of great wings, though the reports exist and seem believable. One consistent feature is that the airships are never described as luminous, as we have long expected UFOs observed in darkness to be; the lights airship witnesses observed were carried in the front, back, or sides of the vehicles or shone through windows. Witnesses also noted, as had their counterparts in 1896-97, bright, sometimes blinding searchlights.

We have already remarked on the absence of reports collected directly from witnesses; obviously we are not referring here to firsthand "reports" published in Western newspapers. The kinds of reports generally assumed to be rare or nonexistent are those in which the witness communicates his sighting directly and personally, in an account he has spoken or written himself. In fact, there are a number of such reports from the post-1897 airship period. They came to light years afterwards, when old people wrote CSI, Donald Keyhoe, Allen Hynek, and others about events they had experienced long ago but remembered well. It is certainly preferable, of course, to have testimony as soon after the fact as possible, but in this case we will have to take what we can get. At any rate, the descriptions are so strikingly consistent that they more convincingly argue for accurate recall than for its opposite.

In the early 1970s Milwaukee ufologist Lee Marshall interviewed P. A. McGilvra about a sighting the latter had made in the summer of 1900, only three years after

the great airship scare. At the time of the encounter McGilvra was 14 years old and on his way home, at 3 a.m., from a dance in a rural area near Reedsburg, Wisconsin. He had stopped at the top of a small hill because something seemed to be disturbing his horse. Seeking the cause, he looked around and then up where he saw, against a cloudless sky brilliant with stars, the outline of an enormous dark, dirigible-shaped vehicle. The object passed at a low altitude over some nearby poplar trees, and as it did so, the trunks of the trees bent dramatically as if in reaction to a strong wind, but no wind was blowing. When the object flew over the witness' head, he heard a loud swishing sound which reminded him of the sound of a stick passed rapidly through the air. Soon the object was out of sight, but the horse remained frightened for some time after. McGilvra told Marshall that other local people had had similar experiences around the same time. Though he did not use the word in his interview with Marshall, McGilvra saw an airship.

Around twilight on a day in 1904 two young Dixboro, Michigan, men, Wirt Covert and Arthur Eldert, were walking home from a trip to a rural grocery store when they spotted a large object moving from east to west at a low altitude. It went behind some tall pine trees, then passed on the other side of a high Methodist church steeple. Covert recalled, "I can still see the steeple outlined between us and this object" and, beyond the object, a range of hills. "Suddenly this object rose at least a 60 degree angle over the hills and disappeared. To this day it is fresh in my mind. Its shape reminded me of pictures of the Confederate gunboat Merrimac[k]. It had sort of a thick mast sticking up from the center and when it banked up so quick I'll swear this mast tipped backward at least 45 degrees and a bright orange light shone in the windows" (Covert, 1965).

In La Porte, Indiana, at 10:30 one evening in October 1909, a huge object resembling two inverted bowls, with a row of lights crossing the center, shined a blinding light on a wagon carrying persons on their way home from church. The horses reared up in terror. According to one of the witnesses, Ruth Smith, "illuminated tentacles of phosphorescent color" extended from the UFO to the ground; these light streams had the "intensity of a giant flood bulb." After a few minutes the object began moving slowly, edging in the direction of the wagon in a smooth, graceful motion. At 10:45 it disappeared suddenly (Smith, 1961).

"When I was seven years old [in 1910]," Myrtle B. Lee would recall, "my brother Jack and I were playing in the yard. We saw a bright object hovering just above the trees about 50 yards from us. It was silver colored and shaped like a zeppelin, but not quite as big. It had nothing hanging from the underside. We stood frozen to the ground, not seeing something like that before. We thought whoever was inside was watching us. There were no windows. When it took off, we saw it start up, and it completely vanished before our eyes. We called it a

balloon. When I saw a real balloon, I knew what Jack and I saw wasn't a balloon" (Lee, 1968).

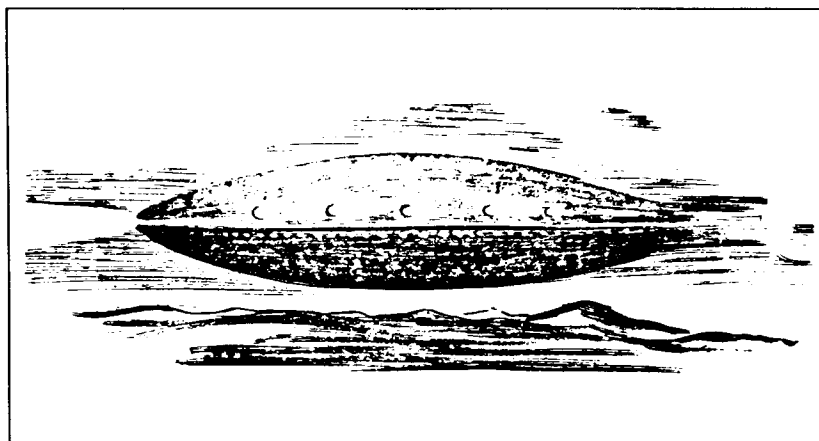
Interestingly, even newspaper accounts from these early years of the century are modest in their claims about airships and cohere closely to reports we have from other than press sources. Here are some witnesses' accounts quoted in period newspapers: "[M]y eye was at once attracted by a powerful light, which I should judge to be some 1200 feet above the earth. Outlined against the stars was a dark body . . . somewhat oblong and narrow in shape . . . about a couple of yards long . . . going at a tremendous pace" (*Peterborough [England] Advertiser*, March 27, 1909). A "long dark object . . . torpedo-shaped . . . very long and large" hovered for a few minutes, then "rose higher, and travelled very swiftly in a westerly direction towards the coast . . . showing . . . two very powerful searchlights at either end for a second or two" (*London Evening News*, May 15, 1909). A fast-moving object "like a boat with a flat top" and 150 feet long sailed over a farm near Greenvale, Australia, in the early morning hours (Brunt, 1975); compare this with the Michigan UFO mentioned above. Other newspaper stories mention, as had many in 1896-97, that some airships possessed great wings—a detail cited in only one of the firsthand reports available to us (see below) but that we will probably have to accept as an accurate representation of what some witnesses said they saw.

Had it been published in the local newspaper, Lloyd L. Arnold's 1913 sighting in Lansing, Michigan, would likely have been reported as an "airship" observation. At dusk, he told Gary Larreategui years later, he saw a "golden-colored oval-shaped object" at 500 feet altitude. Moving at a great speed, it was "better than 100 feet in diameter and moved without a sound. . . . [It] was well lighted by the setting sun, which would probably account for its golden hue" (Clark and Farish, 1974). Possibly the incident was reported in the local paper; certainly one very much like it was. Near dusk, according to the *Lansing State Journal* of June 30, 1913, an airship streaked over a Lansing racetrack as a race was in progress. "The aerial mystery carried no lights of any description and was too elongated for an ordinary balloon," the paper said.

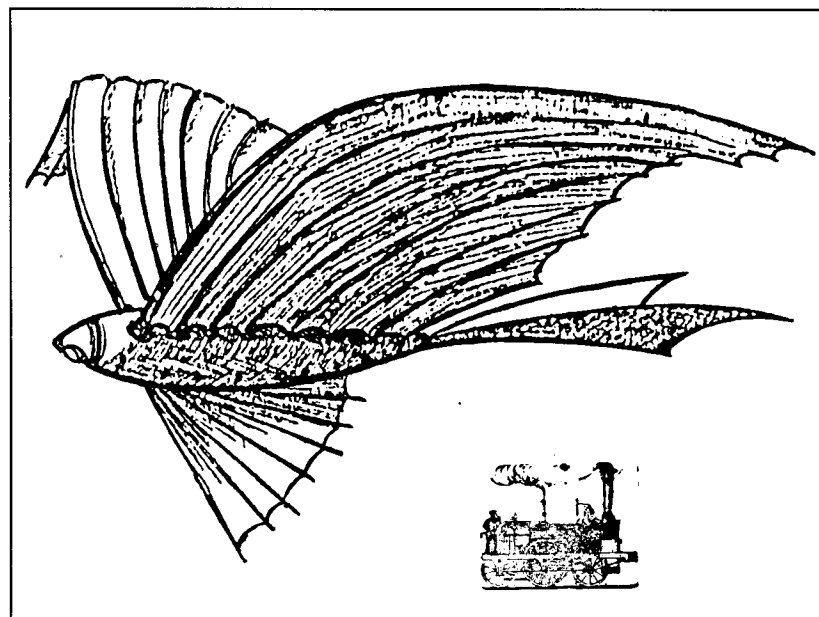
In the years that followed, sightings of airshiplike objects continued. Some examples taken from both press and personal accounts:

Manchester, England, October 14, 1914: Albert Buss observed an "absolutely black, spindle-shaped object" crossing the sun. "Its extraordinarily clear-cut outline was surrounded by a kind of halo" (Fort, 1941). Rich Field, near Waco, Texas, early 1918: Soldiers leaving the mess hall after the evening meal were startled to see a 100- to 150-foot-long cigar-shaped object coming toward them. "It came directly overhead," according to witness Edwin Bauhan, "and was no more than 500 feet high so we got an excellent view of it. It had no motors, no rigging, it was noiseless. . . . It was . . . a rose or sort of flame color.

... I could observe no windows. . . . We all experienced the weirdest feeling of our lives, and sat in our tent puzzling over it for some time" (Bauhan, 1953). Between Wathena, Kansas, and Rushville, Missouri, June 8, 1920: Two hundred persons, all of them rural residents, saw a large cylindrical object; they said it flew at an altitude of no more than 75 feet. When it reached Rushville, it turned sharply to the right and to the east and vanished in a cloud two miles away (*St. Joseph [Missouri] Gazette*, June 9). Osage hills of Oklahoma, January 1924: On a very cold night two riders saw a beam of light shining on the snow. The source was a large, cigar-shaped object "with white dots of lights on the side and a blue flame at the stern." The object "made a slight hissing noise" (Powers, 1953). North of Chicago, June 1925: At 2:30 a.m. a driver stopped his Model-T Ford to watch a 300-foot-long, cigar-shaped object fly south toward the city. "It was a lot of colors, such as blue, red, white, green; also, red sparks were flying away from its nose . . . and about 100 feet down through the center [was] all lit up with windows. As it passed in front of us a heat wave came down from it" (*San Diego Evening Tribune*, August 12, 1965). Wolfe County, Kentucky, summer 1927: Nine-year-old Reece Lacey saw a "perfectly shaped, huge fish, with big fins extended outward near the front and small, short ones near the rear" (Lacey, 1958); compare this object with the ones depicted in airship sketches published in the *San Francisco Call* of November 23, 1896, and in the *Dallas Morning News* of April 16, 1897. Between Lafayette and Newton, New Jersey, circa August 1942: Three adults saw a huge cigar-shaped object hovering near them. It "had two rows of windows" which "gave off blue, green, white and red fluorescent lights. . . . We watched this object for approximately 10 minutes; then it silently and very slowly took off. From where I stood, I had the impression of hearing laughter or happy voices. My imagination? I cannot say. I know I felt this happiness very strongly. My husband and I also got in our car and drove to Ogdensburg [New Jersey] to our home. As we drove along, I again saw this large cigar-shaped object, and suddenly it took off very fast and disappeared" (Howell, 1979). Santa Barbara, California, October 1943: At 9 p.m., as she gazed out from the balcony of her home, an air spotter for the Civilian Air Command noticed a "huge dark aerial object approaching." Moving soundlessly, it barely skimmed over a



From the *San Francisco Call*, November 23, 1896.



From the *Dallas Morning News*, April 16, 1897.

nearby hill. "From the front of the object a beam of light shot down at an angle toward the earth," she said. "At intervals it swung from side to side as if scanning the hills and homes below. I sat in my balcony, too frozen with terror to move. I realized that the object was flying very low, for it filled my view and seemed just barely to miss hitting our two-story house as it passed overhead" (Finley, 1958). Queens, New York, summer 1944: "We were riding our bikes on a footpath adjacent to Grand Central Parkway . . . in a wooded section. As we started climbing a hill, we looked up and saw a cigar-shaped object broadside to us. . . . [I]t was longer and slimmer than a blimp; it was of smooth metal construction with no windows or openings in sight. It didn't have a gondola on its underside as normal dirigibles and blimps do" (Wieland, 1961). Lafayette, New York, spring 1946: Driving in an open convertible, two men noticed a gleam in the sky. It turned out to be from the sun reflecting on a

metallic cigar-shaped structure with sharply pointed ends. It was perfectly smooth, with no protrusions, motionless, 300 to 400 feet long, and at 5000 to 10,000 feet in altitude. After two minutes it disappeared instantaneously (NICAP files). Ipswich, Massachusetts, July 1946: A "long silver-colored cigar (projectile shaped) appeared suddenly out of the haze which hung over the water on a hot muggy day. . . . It moved soundlessly. It was low over the water—it had no fins—nothing that I could see projecting. . . . My view was brief since it disappeared suddenly" (Allen, 1952).

Airship occupants figure in personal reports as well as press ones. Two examples of the former:

Playing in a Baltimore baseball field one day in the spring of 1910, five-year-old Lawrence Crone spotted a metallic, brown, blimplike object, over 100 feet long, hovering near a pine tree 200 feet away. Along its side was a row of variously colored rectangular windows. Only one was clear, and through that strange entities took turns looking at him, in groups of twos and threes; he thought there may have been as many as 20 of them. From what he could observe of them—only their heads and upper bodies were visible—they were conical in shape, with pointed heads; possibly the effect was caused by headgear, since the points varied in color from being to being. They were dressed in light-colored garments with a furlike texture. Each of the entities had small dots for eyes and a straight line for a (presumed) mouth but no other features. According to Crone, who related the story separately to ufologists Ted Bloecher and Thomas P. Deuley, two young men also saw the sight and were badly frightened (HUMCAT files).

A somewhat similar CE3 took place one evening in Somerville, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1938. Malcolm Perry saw what he first took to be a Navy blimp gliding quietly from east to west, but when a second glance failed to spot gondola or propellers, Perry stopped to observe more carefully. "I noticed there were what looked like square or rectangular port holes in the sides," he recalled, "and I could see the silhouette of a person looking down at me. . . . I had a terribly strong urge to wave with all my might but restrained myself." He looked up and down the street in hopes of seeing other witnesses, but he was alone. "I looked back and could see other people at other portholes apparently changing places [and] looking down. At this point it disappeared behind some low scudding clouds, and I couldn't see it anymore" (Perry, 1964).

For the benefit of readers unversed in pre-Arnold UFO reports, we must emphasize here that airship UFOs were not the *only* kinds of aerial anomalies then being observed. As in 1896-97, people were seeing varieties of objects familiar to all ufologists and voluminously documented in the literature. Our purpose here is to define the particular kind of UFO that created the airship legend.

*This article concludes in the next issue of IUR.* ■

## EDITORIAL — continued from page 3

cases more frequent, and UFO waves became like that in the Hudson Valley and, now, Belgium. Waves are now more limited in space, but continue longer, several months or even years, with a low-flying, large triangular UFO the object most commonly reported.

It would surely seem that waves like these, particularly the events in Belgium and the involvement of the military, are predestined to increase serious interest in the UFO phenomenon. That was the dream. The reality is that life goes on as before.

Why that should be so is not hard to discover. Most scientists don't get involved in research these days unless there is money available for a topic. Money isn't appropriated for UFO research because budgets are tight. The Belgian sightings can be ignored because they happened in Belgium, not the United States or England. The French, as is their wont, took a bemused attitude toward the whole affair, as they have toward Belgium throughout history. Most media are interested in sensationalism, and the serious press, personified by the *New York Times*, has a hard, skeptical shell that repels any evidence for anomalies (the *Wall Street Journal* is a notable exception). In other words, society is structured so as to make the recognition of anomalies like UFO reports highly unlikely.

Are there lessons in all this? I think so, and they go like this. First, there is no perfect case (unless UFOs land on the White House lawn, an event that immediately puts CUFOS, SOBEPS, and other groups out of business). Second, this should not be viewed as somehow discouraging, because with very few exceptions, there are no "perfect cases" in any science. Recognition of a new phenomenon or theory in any discipline is a long-term affair, as was the case for the theory of continental drift in geology. Ufology is and will be no different (though I must admit my patience is being tried a wee bit). So third, we should press ahead as most of us have been doing, one small piece of the puzzle at a time.

The dream is over, and it's morning in ufology. These new sightings in Belgium and the worldwide changes in UFO waves and sightings are intriguing, if still very puzzling. They give us lots of things to think about, as we compare today's cases to those of 40 years ago. As the Rolling Stones have reminded us, you can't always get what you want, but sometimes you get what you need.

— Mark Rodeghier

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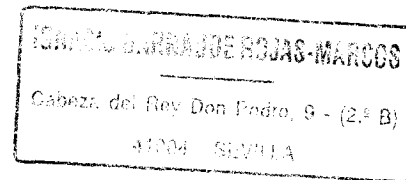
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# Airships: Part II

by Jerome Clark



■ ■ Jerome Clark is editor of *IUR* and vice president of CUFOs. His books include *UFOs in the 1980s* (1990) and (with J. Gordon Melton and Aidan A. Kelly) *New Age Almanac* (1990). The following article is adapted from his forthcoming *The Emergence of a Phenomenon* (Apogee Books), a study of the early years of the UFO controversy.

## The airship identified

Let us now consider what we have:

We began with a comprehensive review of what at first appearance is a bizarre, wildly anomalous event in the early history of the UFO phenomenon: the 1896-97 American airship scare. As we have seen, this event has been a source of enormous confusion and controversy, giving encouragement to supernatural speculators (Keel, Vallee), to debunkers (Menzel), and to psychosocial hypothesizers (Arts, Bartholomew, Evans), all working from the premise that the airship affair "proves" that UFO manifestations reflect human cultural expectations and thus—depending on the theorizers' bias—are paranormal shapeshifters (either "ultraterrestrials" or "materialized psychisms") or, less grandly and more believably, hallucinations and misperceptions.

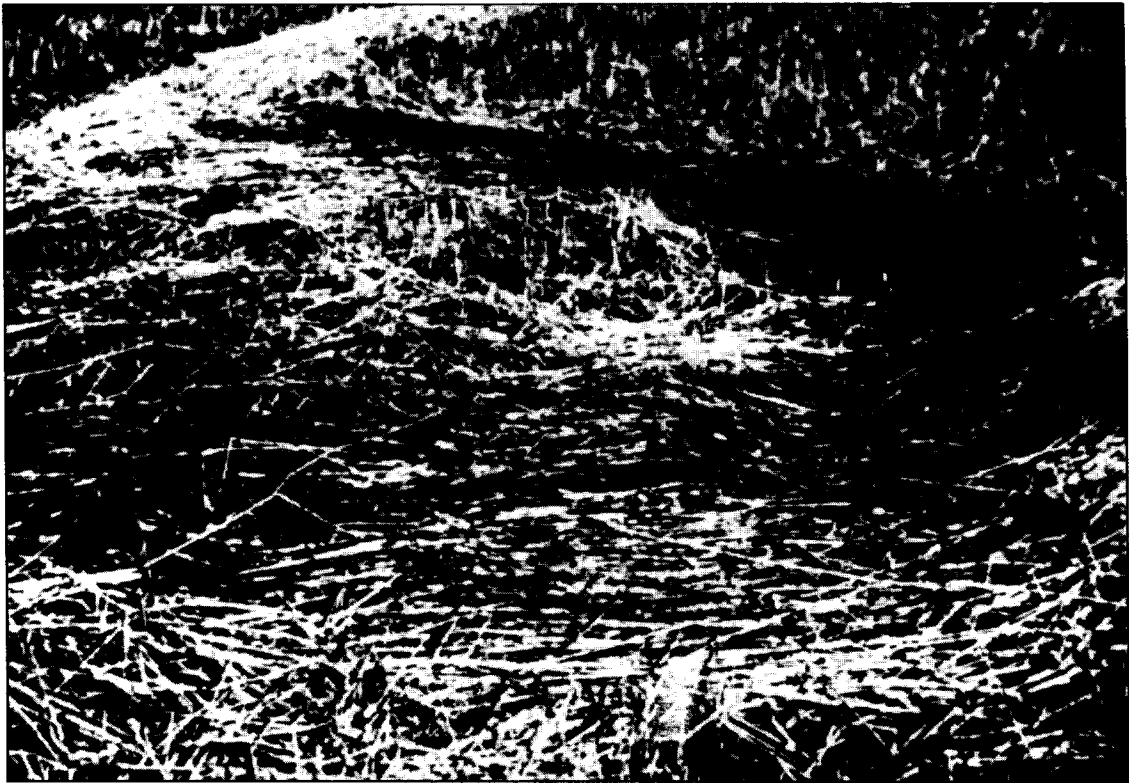
These sorts of hypotheses are fundamentally flawed. They mistakenly assume that the late-19th-Century press was relating more or less accurately what sincere people were reporting. Yet we know now that this was not the case, that the press played the affair for laughs and had not the slightest qualms about printing vast amounts of outrageous fiction about airships and their occupants. Even so, we need not abandon all hope; we have other airship reports from other sources and places. From them we get a much clearer idea of what people were actually reporting. We learn that cylindrical, *nonluminous* (an important point) metallic objects with lights on their sides, searchlights, and, on occasion, wings have been observed all through our century. Until the late 1910s or so, they were usually called "airships." After the airship scares were forgotten and witnesses (before Arnold, anyway) had no context into which to place these weird sights, they were called nothing in particular except mysterious, though frequently witnesses first thought they

were observing a dirigible—until the object did something no dirigible could do.

In short, stripped of all the lies, practical jokes, and exaggerations, the 1896-97 affair turns out to be a conventional UFO wave in all particulars, including this one, implicitly known to UFO students but seldom mentioned: though many types of UFOs were seen, one type dominated the wave. In post-Arnold waves sighting concentrations have been defined variously by flame- or smoke-spewing cylinders (1946), daylight discs (1947), flying wings (1983), triangles (recently), or even CE3s (1973). Yet in all instances other sorts of UFOs, though largely overlooked in the attendant publicity, were also appearing.

What gives the 1896-97 wave its particular interest—and explains at least some of the reason it has baffled ufologists for so long—is that the dominant UFO was of a type that, while widely reported over the last century, *has never been remarked on in the UFO literature*. Airship UFOs are not simply the classic cigar shapes, as chroniclers from Keyhoe onward have depicted them. Certainly these objects are often characterized, accurately enough, as cigar-shaped (though as late as 1957, in—of all places—McMinnville, Oregon, a UFO was said to resemble an "airship" [*Flying Saucer Digest*, December 1958, p. 7]), but that is only the beginning of a proper classification, because several varieties of cylindrical UFOs from "ghost rockets" to "motherships" to "cloud cigars" have been voluminously chronicled, and airships are none of these. No one has noticed how often witnesses report structures that look generally like dirigibles, that carry bright searchlights, and that, unlike other UFOs observed in darkness, are not luminous. At the very least this puts the lie to the argument that witnesses' perceptions are shaped wholly by popular conceptions of what UFOs are supposed to look like. In the absence of an airship-UFO model, it seems obvious that here the objects observed, not the witnesses' preconceived notions, are driving the testimony.

The numerous post-Arnold sightings of airship UFOs will be the subject of a later article, in which a fuller delineation of the characteristics of this UFO type will be made. Before the present article ends, however, we will consider just one example, a case the U.S. Air Force investigated and pronounced unexplained in *Project Blue Book Special Report 14* (Maccabee, 1979).



Question 6 brought responses from eight who knew of their colleague's discovery of a circle in his field. It is not very revealing. But the next question is more interesting. Respondents were about equal in their belief that they could envision a way to duplicate a crop circle. A few were ludicrous, for example those that mentioned helicopters or hovercraft. Most of those who felt they could create a circle held to the notion of trampling the crop by foot or with rollers; some realized the need for precision and suggested pegs or stakes in the center to ensure roundness. Of course most circles and rings are not totally round, as Cameron has noted. Still, this seems a logical way to create the effect.

One comment about the use of stilts needs to be addressed here. After a British tabloid published instructions on how to create the circles, some hoaxers tried the methods described. Following the discovery of circles in Canada, local media advertised the techniques. Investigators fashioned makeshift stilts and tried to enter a field, but the instability of the soil ensured that the stilts left significant marks in the ground, and it was felt that the method was inappropriate for the local situation. Nevertheless some kind of stilts could likely be used to make certain markings found at crop-circle sites. In other words, investigators should not discarded the idea altogether.

As for the areas of expertise, physicists may be shocked to learn they have been nominated as the group most concerned with crop-circle research (perhaps atmospheric physics is what the respondents had in mind). Agriculturalists concede that they, too, should be involved, and it would have been surprising had they noted otherwise. Other fields of expertise suggested for crop-circle research ranged from history to geology (?),

and astronomers may be as embarrassed to be rated as high as botanists for their input into the matter. The most important piece of information obtained from this question is that crop circles seem to be an interdisciplinary phenomenon.

Should scientists study crop circles? Most respondents replied in the negative, and this, again, is unsurprising considering the ridicule curtain that exists in science with regard to anomalous phenomena. Crop-circle research probably would not look good on curriculum vitae, especially when one is applying for tenure. Nonetheless three respondents suggested they would like to be involved in investigations, and the previous question about formal investigations yielded some interesting results.

Those who thought there should be a formal investigation of crop circles seemed open-minded. Some wanted to know only how the hoaxers had created them. Others wanted to know more about the cause, natural or otherwise. Several indicated that scientific information would come out of an investigation. Of those who did not think a formal investigation was in order, many considered circle research a waste of time, but it seems this was likely due to a perception that the circles are all hoaxes. The need to catch circle hoax perpetrators seemed a low priority, and the possibility that the circles were anything out of the ordinary was not considered, even though respondents acknowledged they had never examined them personally. There was no consensus as to who should lead a formal investigation: police, "credible" university researchers, or ufologists.

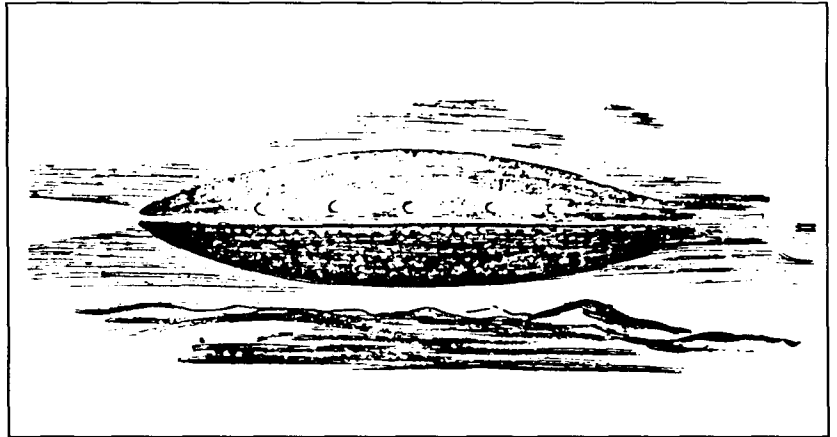
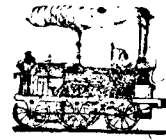
The miscellaneous comments offered at the end of the survey form showed a wide range of opinion. One

*continued on page 23*

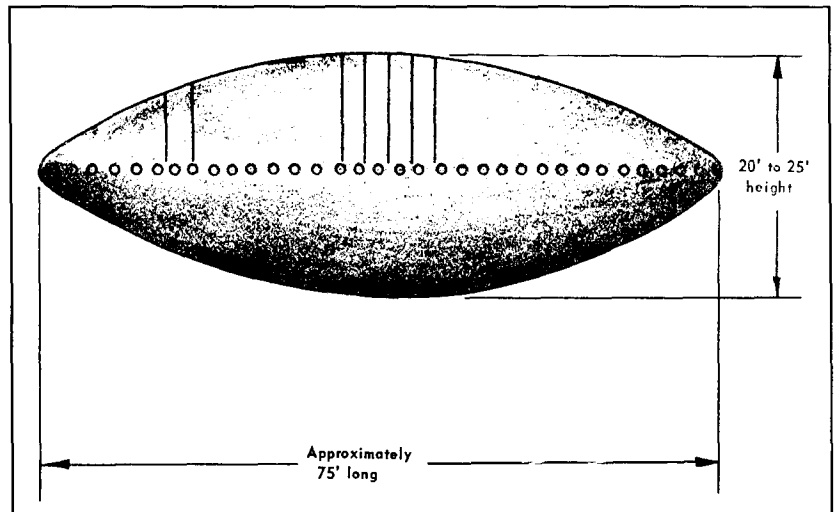
On August 25, 1952, around 6 a.m., a Pittsburg, Kansas, musician named William Squyres was driving to work at a local radio station when, according to the Air Force account, "he noted the unknown object off to the right side of the road at a horizontal angle of about 40 degrees and at a distance of about 250 yards. He immediately started slowing down his car and continued to view the object through the right side of [the] windshield. When he came to a point where [the] object was visible through the right door glass and about 90 degrees to [the] right of his vehicle, [he] opened the door and stepped out on the road. At all times, he attempted to keep [the] object in view.

"After he had stepped to [the] side of the road nearest the object, it began a rapid vertical ascent. Squyres estimated he viewed [the] object for about one-half minute. When [the] object reached a height 'about as high as an airplane flies' [the] object then increased acceleration at a tremendous rate and rapidly disappeared from view, straight up through broken clouds. Clouds did not obscure view of [the] disappearing object at any time.

"Squyres described the object as platter-shaped; by this he said it looked like two platters or bowls had been put together by reversing one platter and placing it over the first one. He estimated it was about 75 feet long and 40 feet wide and about 15 feet through the mid-section, measuring vertically in center of [the] object. [The] object was about 10 feet above the ground. Squyres then went on with a more detailed explanation of the object: It was of a dull aluminum color; smooth surface; one window in the front section, with head and shoulders visible of one man sitting motionless facing [the] forward edge of object, clear glass, light in forward section, medium blue continuous light. In the midsection of [the] object were several windows extending from [the] top to [the] near edge of [the] object; midsection of [the] ship had a blue light which gradually changed to different shades. There was a large amount of activity and movement in the midsection which could not be identified as being human as [but?] it did not have a regular pattern of movement such as mechanical objects would make in the blue light. There were no windows, doors, portholes, vents, seams, etc., visible to [the] observer in [the] rear section of object or under the object (viewed at time of ascent). Another identifiable feature was that along the outer edge of [the] object, there were a series of propellers about six



*Drawing of an airship from 1896 California newspaper.*



*William Squyres' UFO from Project Blue Book Special Report 14.*

to seven inches in diameter, spaced closely together[;] these propellers were mounted on a bracket so they revolved in a horizontal plane along the edge of the object. These propellers were revolving at a high rate.

"[Squyres] heard a deep throbbing sound coming from the object. When the object started its ascent, it emitted a sound like a large covey of quail starting to fly at one time. . . . [T]he grass was moving under the object when it was hovering" (Gross, 1986).

This incident could as easily have occurred in 1897 as in 1952. Everything here has an antecedent in earlier airship sightings: the occupant staring forward, the activity inside the craft, the propellers, the windows, the sounds. Presumably, if Squyres had seen it a few hours earlier, it would have been flashing a searchlight. For further evidence of the link between the late-19th-Century airship and this mid-20th-Century UFO, compare Blue Book's sketch based on Squyres' description with a drawing done 56 years earlier of an airship seen over California.

*continued on page 24*

## EDITORIAL — *continued from page 3*

seemingly intelligent behavior such UFOs have traditionally exhibited. There was a time when those who wanted to know what was going on listened to what witnesses reported instead of telling them what they experienced. Not that they failed to appreciate the occasional fallibility of perception; of course they understood that. But they also understood, as do all who depend on eyes and ears to get them across the street, that perception can usually be depended upon to record experience accurately enough for practical purposes and even, as scientists have found in any number of instances, scientific ones as well. After all, meteorites *are* stones falling from the sky, not (as an earlier generation's psychosocial hypothesis had it) lightning striking earthbound stones as filtered through the naive misperceptions of superstitious peasants conditioned to believe in magical events. And, moreover (an obvious point but one whose significance seems to have eluded just about everyone), most identifications of UFOs can be made *from witnesses' descriptions alone*.

In short order (in mid-June, to be specific) Kevin Randle and Don Schmitt's long-awaited *UFO Crash at Roswell* will be out. It records the most thoroughly investigated, the most completely documented event in the history of ufology. The Roswell incident is, of course, also the most important case of all. As its secrets are unraveled (and the investigation continues), ufology's big questions, the ones that brought our field into being in the first place, are being answered: What are UFOs? Who pilots them? What does officialdom know, and when did it know it? Those whose interpretation of the UFO phenomenon is based in empirical evidence will rejoice as that heretofore unkillable canard, that UFO research has made no progress in four decades, is disposed of once and for all.

Yet, as no one could have predicted four decades ago, the last thing many ufologists of the 1990s want to hear is any of the above. One influential figure in the anti-ETI camp candidly acknowledges he would be "disappointed" if UFOs turned out to be spacecraft. Perhaps this says something about how jaded some of us have become, or how alluring a metaphysical approach is to some. Another theorist of a militantly New Age disposition seeks justification in geophysics, or his version of geophysics, for a nature-based metaphysics with which he has managed to link the UFO phenomenon, or his version of it—a version those outside the faith may fail to recognize and that can be sustained only by wholesale dismissal of witness testimony and unrelenting condemnation of all who presume to find meaning in the mass of contrary evidence. Other ufologists, including some good friends of ours, are now trumpeting something called "plasma vortexes" as the solution not just to UFOs (a mystery no longer, at least one book has already assured us) but to just about everything else you can imagine. It is astonishing that such views, remarkable

chiefly for the legions of questions they manage to beg, should be embraced so enthusiastically when their irrelevance has never been more apparent.

Cynicism, intellectual timidity, religious commitment, fear, a desire (surely an understandable one) to maintain the comforting illusion that we live safe, unseen, and unviolated out in the galactic provinces—what chance does evidence of an unsettling, even disturbing claim have in the face of these? As the Roswell saga unfolds, we will see these human foibles in abundance. One would like Roswell's critics to surprise us with something other than sweeping denunciations or invented "facts," which by now, having long since lost their capacity to surprise, are only dismayingly familiar. We are unlikely to hear anything else until we demand of our critics what we demand of ourselves: that our beliefs be grounded in what we can reasonably demonstrate to be true. If critics cannot provide us with this much, the debate is already over.

In the days ahead we are going to find out how relevant investigation and documentation are to current ufology. At the very least we must insist, if the debate is to be kept honest, that claims be *referenced*—in other words, demonstrably not made up on the spot. Critics must exhibit the same meticulous concern for factual accuracy and logical coherence that Roswell proponents have shown over and over again.—*Jerome Clark*

## Abduction—*continued from page 6*

come to orgasm merely by thinking of having sex. So, yes, these recollections could be fantasies.

What the FPP cannot account for is the confirmation by Rachael that on the night of one of Susan's abductions she saw a ball of light enter the room. Moreover, two weeks prior to my writing this article, Susan revisited the dentist for the first time in 10 years and in the course of treatment had an x-ray taken of her upper gums. I have spoken with the dentist, who confirms that this x-ray shows two unusual straight metal-looking pieces in either her upper gum or bone, beneath her nostrils. He tells me he has never seen anything like them before and cannot explain them in terms of any dental treatment with which he is familiar. This x-ray is now in my possession and I am investigating. ■

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## Blue Book—continued from page 12

preoccupied with whatever had occurred earlier that day. Of course Wright-Patterson housed other projects than those under the Foreign Technology Division.

But Hynek was working for FTD. Researcher Brian Parks has recently obtained, through the Freedom of Information Act, Hynek's record of employment as FTD consultant from 1970 to 1974. He worked only a few days each year, but it was an ongoing consultancy, an executive appointment, beginning in April 1970, less than six months after Blue Book's official closure. Was this work related to UFOs? At this point we still do not know.

On December 26, 1976, in the front third-floor office of the Hynek home in Evanston, Illinois, Hynek and I were talking theory as we had so many times over the years. Hynek was not a man to make bold statements, and I recognized the remarks of a man whose thinking had evolved with reluctance and deliberation over 28 years.

"It's very definitely connected with intelligence somewhere," he said, not with excitement and awe but with acceptance and resignation. ■

## Debunking—continued from page 15

Russians love to read, and Russians love to dream. Food shortages will not stop them from gazing into the skies, looking for an explanation of who we are and whence we all come. As the Soviet Union opens up, the ranks of those who seek explanations for UFOs and for the riddles of antiquity expand, and the pace of publishing in these areas quickens. Countless new magazines deal with the UFO phenomenon, sprouting like mushrooms in a rain-drenched forest. In trying to bash these heresies, Kondratov, Shilik, and their ilk have their work cut out for them. ■

## Crop circles—continued from page 19

long, constructive comment suggested parameters for statistical studies and an exchange of information. A comment about tourism was not unexpected but reveals a naive view of the places where circles are located, especially in Canada. As for people who enjoy being "in the spotlight," it is a fact that many owners of fields with crop circles avoid publicity and do not even report the circles for fear of ridicule. On the other hand, souvenir stands at crop-circle sites in England and Canada have been set up (and some field owners are charging admission).

The survey shows that agriculturists are less than experts on the phenomenon of crop circles. Their expertise in examining field markings, however, makes them useful sources for investigations and research. Ufologists probably have the most extensive backgrounds for crop-

circle research in terms of having historical data for comparison, but they may tend to be biased in favor of the UFO explanation. Similarly meteorologists may be the most versed in weather explanations, but they will not have the advantage of agricultural experience possessed by farmers. This all suggests a multidisciplinary approach to crop circles may be the best answer. It would not hurt to have police and other law-enforcement officials involved, either.

The survey conducted in Manitoba was of limited scope, and similar studies in other regions may yield different results. It would be best to have as large a database as possible to draw upon for information, but since the survey gathered only opinions for the most part, the amount of useful information gained for crop-circle research is minimal.

Crop-circle researchers are encouraged to draw upon a wide variety of resources in their investigations and to communicate their ideas and discoveries to other interested persons and organizations. Data about circles should be exchanged freely, especially because circles seem to be a global phenomenon. More important, researchers should not feel committed to any one theory until more data have been examined and experts in the fields of agriculture, meteorology, and law enforcement as well as local farmers should be consulted in investigations.

Crop circles may be explained as simply as hoaxes, but we would then be in a position to ask the sociological question *why*, the psychological question *who*, and the mechanical question *how*. If the circles (and triangles and rectangles and spirals) are caused by aliens, then we can ask what is their motivation (though realizing that we have no way of comprehending extraterrestrial logic). If the crop circles are weather effects, why have they appeared recently in such numbers? If they are a rare phenomenon, then they should not have increased so dramatically in number. If they are so common, then why would they concentrate in England, and why have some farmers with many decades' experience insisted that the circles resemble nothing in recent memory? ■

## Airships—continued from page 24

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# A CATALOG OF EARLY CRASH CLAIMS



BY JEROME CLARK

**S**tories alleging crashes of extraordinary flying objects saw print long before the onset of the UFO era in the summer of 1947. In what follows I list and briefly discuss such claims. I do not cite single-informant anecdotes that exist solely in retrospective testimony, sometimes many years after the (supposed) fact, since such tales practically never have evidential value and are usually suspect. Retrospective testimony appears here only when it relates to crash claims that were recorded either at the time of their reported occurrence or within some reasonable period afterwards.

## THE AIRSHIP ERA

*Indian Ocean, September 1862.* During the great airship wave of 1897, John Leander of El Campo, Texas, wrote the *Houston Post* to relate a tale attributed to an "old sailor living now in El Campo . . . who has proclaimed that he had not only seen the vessel but had actually seen people from another world. . . . The name of the old gentleman is Mr. Oleson, and for many years he was a boatswain in the Danish navy, but at the time he saw the airship he was a mate on the Danish brig *Christine*."

As Leander told the story, a storm on the Indian Ocean drove the *Christine* off course and eventually broke it up. Oleson and a small number of injured shipmates found themselves on a desolate rocky island devoid of plant or animal life. While the storm was still raging, the sailors saw a strange aircraft, "as large as a modern battleship" and apparently out of control, crash into a cliff. When they investigated, they found the object had "four huge wings" as well as "strange implements and articles of furniture." They also discovered "metal boxes covered with strange characters" and containing food.

"But their horror was intensified," Leander attested,

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*Jerome Clark, editor of IUR and vice president of CUFOS, is author, most recently, of Encyclopedia of Strange and Unexplained Physical Phenomena (1993), also published in an abridged trade-paperback version as Unexplained! 347 Sightings, Incredible Occurrences, and Puzzling Physical Phenomena.*

"when they found the bodies of more than a dozen men dressed in garments of strange fashion and texture. The bodies were a dark bronze color, but the strangest feature of all was the immense size of the men. They had no means of measuring their bodies, but estimated them to be more than 12 feet high. Their hair and beard were also long and as soft and silky as the hair of an infant."

The sight drove one sailor insane, and he promptly jumped off the cliff. The others were so frightened that they left the scene for two days but finally returned to the wreck, dragged the giant bodies into the ocean, and built a raft from the craft's materials. Sixty hours later a Russian ship picked them up, though not before three more of the sailors "succumbed to their injuries and the awful mental strain."

As proof that the incident occurred, Leander assures us, Oleson had a "finger ring of immense size . . . a compound of metals unknown to any jeweler who has seen it."

Nothing about this story is believable. It has all the earmarks of a melodramatic 19th-century adventure fantasy of the sort chronicled, most famously, by Edgar Allan Poe (especially *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* [1838]) and Herman Melville as well as by many lesser contemporaries. Swedish writer Sven Rosén notes that in Scandinavian folklore trolls, once thought to be giants, were mostly destroyed in violent storms during the 17th century. Subsequent tales recounted discoveries of strangely clad, dark-skinned giants found dead after storms. It appears that someone, probably Leander ("Oleson" may not have even existed), fused then-current airship lore with older beliefs and so fashioned one of the original UFO tall tales.

Sources: *Houston Daily Post*, May 2, 1897; Sven Rosén, letter to Jerome Clark, September 1, 1990.

*Dundy County, Nebraska, June 6, 1884.* A more superficially plausible story—at least up to a point—was recorded in early June 1884 in a weekly newspaper, *Nebraska Nugget*, published in Holdrege. An anonymous correspondent from Benkelman, in remote Dundy County, reported that a band of cowboys had witnessed the crash of a blazing object. On investigating, they came upon "pieces of machinery lying on the ground, scattered in the path made by the aerial visitor, glowing with heat so intense as to scorch



the grass for a long distance around each fragment and made it impossible for one to approach it." Overcome by the heat, one witness collapsed and lost his sight.

By evening crowds of people were gazing on the wreckage of the vehicle, the skeletal outline of which suggested it had been "about 50 or 60 feet long, cylindrical, and about 10 or 12 feet in diameter." The following morning the district brand inspector and others came to study the remains of an object which Lincoln's *Daily State Journal* speculated "must be an air vessel belonging originally to some other planet."

A follow-up story from the same nameless Benkelman reporter related that the vehicle's remains had vanished in a blinding rainstorm, "melted, dissolved by the water like a spoonful of salt." He meant, of course, that salt was to be the substance with which the tale should be ingested, and the *State Journal*, which had all but endorsed the yarn, now treated it as the joke it surely was.

In later years folklorist Roger Welsch, journalist Russ Toler, and I would separately interview older Dundy County residents, including members of the local historical society, none of whom had ever heard of any such event despite extensive knowledge of the county's frontier period.

Sources: Jerome Clark, "Spaceship and Saltshaker," *IUR* 11 (November/December 1986): 12, 21; *Daily State Journal* (Lincoln), June 8, 10, 11, 1884; *Nebraska Nugget*, June 1884 (exact date unknown, probably June 7); Ida Toler, interviewed by Jerome Clark, January 2, 1986; Ida Toler, letter to Jerome Clark, January 9, 1986; Roger Welsch, interviewed by Jerome Clark, January 2, 1986.

**Stanford Heights, California, December 3, 1896.** The airship scare of 1896-97 inspired any number of practical jokes. One of the first was cooked up by the director of an amusement park in collaboration with J. D. deGear of San Francisco. A late-evening crashing sound followed by cries for help brought local dairy farmers to the scene of what appeared to be a damaged airship with two ostensibly injured occupants, one of them deGear. One observer quickly noted that marks on the "airship" indicated it had been dragged some distance over ground. "From the flimsy appearance . . . I came to the conclusion that the whole thing was a fake," he said. In due course deGear confessed, according to a press account, that the structure "had been hauled to the crest of the hill on a wagon, dumped over, and dragged down into the gulch where it was found."

Sources: *San Francisco Call*, December 4, 1896; *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1896.

**Bethany, Missouri, early April 1897.** A "True Fakir," as he called himself, wrote a Missouri newspaper to report a fatal collision between an airship and a flagpole. The craft's two bodies were so mangled that they could not be identified, but letters dug out of their pockets indicated that "the men originally came either from San Francisco or Omaha."

**South Joseph [Missouri] Daily Herald, April 9, 1897.**

**Rhodes, April 9, 1897.** A bright light came down over the town at 11 p.m., growing ever louder as it drew closer. It fell into a reservoir near the railroad tracks. "The light was so large and had created so much heat that the horrible noise which occurred when the monster plunged into the water could be heard for miles, and the water of the reservoir was so hot that the naked hand could not be held in it."

Sources: **Marshalltown [Iowa] Evening Times-Republican, April 9, 1897.**

**Newark, Illinois, April 9, 1897.** During an early-morning flight an airship spun out of control and crashed landed on a farm belonging to one Johann Fliegel-toub. Only one of the occupants survived, lapsing into unconsciousness after falling hysterically. Fliegel-toub dragged the figure, garbed in robes "after the fashion of the Greeks in the time of *Odysseus*," into a room in his house and promptly advertised the find, charging the curious a dollar a look. A newspaper correspondent, after steadying his nerves with morphine and cocaine, entered the room and examined the aeronaut who presently revived. Speaking in "Volapuk," he told the reporter that the ship had come from Mars. Soon, his strength returned, he repaired the craft, retrieved the bodies of his companions, and sailed away. For his part the reporter returned to his hotel and "sat up all night smoking opium and eating hashish to get in condition to write this dispatch."

Source: **Carling [Illinois] Evening Gazette, April 13, 1897.**

**Pavilion, Michigan, April 11, 1897.** An airship exploded over Pavilion in the early morning hours. When daylight came, local people found "minute fragments" on a rooftop. Elsewhere a "propeller blade of some very light material, in a partially fused condition," was discovered.

Source: **Detroit Evening News, April 13, 1897.**

**Decatur, Illinois, April 14, 1897.** As he was milking a cow in his barn, a farmer heard a loud crash. Immediately most of the roof was ripped off. Just before a strategically placed kick from the cow rendered him unconscious, he glimpsed an airship as it extricated itself from the collision and managed to limp off into the sky.

Source: **Decatur Evening Republican, April 15, 1897.**

**Humboldt, Tennessee, mid-April 1897.** An airship crashed in the woods along the Forked Deer River. As he rode by on horseback, Sam McLeary spotted its sole occupant encased in ice, presumably because his machine "had evidently reached too high altitudes, and its manager had succumbed to the pitiless cold" of the upper atmosphere, in the words of a newspaper account.

Source: **Nashville American, April 18, 1897.**

"A Strange Story is going that Fleet of Ships have been Seen in the Air in Some part of the Bay of Fundy. Mr. Darrow is lately from there by Land. I enquired of him. He Says they were Said to be Seen at New Minas, at one Mr. Ratchford's, by a Girl, about Sunrise, & that the Girl being frightened, Called out, & two men that were in the House went out & Saw the Same Sight, being 15 ships and a Man forward of them with his hand Stretched out. The Ships made to the Eastward. They were So Near that the people Saw their Sides & ports. The Story did not obtain universal Credit, but Some people believed it. My Own Opinion is that it was only in Imagination, as the Cloud at Sunrise might Make Some Such appearance, which being Improved by Imagination, might be all they Saw. Exceedingly pleasant day & Evening."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Perkins was a merchant and judge by profession, and evidently a skeptic by nature.

### Airship

When the great Airship Wave overtook the US, it certainly did not overlook Canada. There were many Airship sightings in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, in the East, and a few reports scattered across the country. What was not known until recently was that the Province of British Columbia had an incredible number of Airship reports that have never been fully documented. We are just now beginning to unearth these reports and place them on the record. In referring to some of these Canadian Airship reports, it should be noted that some of the "balloon" allusions refer to an explorer named Andre[s]<sup>3</sup>, who was attempting to balloon to the North Pole from Norway. This was much on the minds of Canadians at the time, and many sightings were assumed to be of the Andre balloon. Typical of the BC Airship reports is this from 12 August 1896:

Credible information has been received by [Indian Department] agent Lomas from two Indian parties separated by a long distance. At the time of observation the Andre balloon had been sighted in Lat. 55.15, Long 27. 40 pursuing a near northerly course.

[From] Victoria, August 11. There was a balloon flitting around over the northern portion of British Columbia early in July, or else more than one person was deceived by his eyes.....an Indian boy saw what he took to be a balloon [and] he reported the fact to Indian agent Lloyd at Hazleton.....[when] a week later a party of trappers headed by Chief Ghail of Kitapioux arrived at Hazleton and reported that they had seen a balloon on July 3rd, the residents of that district came to the conclusion that Andre and his party had passed over them. It could hardly have been Andre however as latest reports from Christiana, Spitzbergen on Friday last he had not started on his journey and in fact was contemplating a postponement until next year. A balloon was undoubtedly seen however and the question is now puzzling everyone here, who it is and where did it come?<sup>4</sup>

That very same day, the following report came out of Rossland, in the interior of the Province of BC:

It told of a strange aerial body that approached the town, paused momentarily above a mountain peak, made seven wide circles in the sky, and then sped away on a straight course. The thing was



Perhaps the best overall description of Canada came from a 1984 editorial in the Toronto newspaper *Globe & Mail* marking our accumulation of 25 million inhabitants:

“At 25 million we are still a handful of souls rattling around in a great empty country, yet so tightly packed into our cities that only a few farmers, trappers and truck drivers have a real feel for the emptiness. We are a long way from realizing our full potential but still doing quite nicely, thank you, in comparison with most other nations in the world, whether we measure by bellies filled or freedoms enjoyed.”<sup>1</sup>

It is against this varied backdrop that we carry out our research and investigations.

### **Problems Intrinsic to Canada**

UFO investigation is never easy, but some of the particular socio-economic-demographic problems mentioned here can make our chosen task a lot harder. Communications between researchers and investigators is of prime importance, and because of the distances involved, we rely on telephone calls, fax machines, the services of the always-interesting Canada Post Corporation, courier services, the internet, shouting and anything else we can think of. In many of our UFO cases, an on-site investigation would be a real luxury, and in some others it would be a complete and utter impossibility. However, a great many excellent investigations have been carried out via the mails and telephone. It can be done, it's just more difficult and inconvenient. In the UFO arena, Canadians may not be particularly flamboyant, but we do manage to get the job done.

### **BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL EVENTS**

Canada's involvement with the paranormal goes back as far as the first written records. As well, native oral tradition and history had recorded many apparently paranormal events prior to the arrival of Europeans. However, for our purposes we will limit our focus to events closely related to the UFO phenomenon. Although some famous cases will be touched on for an historical continuity, our main purpose is to bring to light some excellent and little or unknown Canadian UFO cases.

#### **Early reports**

UFO reports from the pre-Arnold era are always of interest since they are all pieces to a puzzle that has not yet been fully integrated into the ufological Big Picture.

#### **1700s**

There are many records of people seeing unusual things in the skies, but many are extremely interpretive accounts, and all suffer from the vernacular of the day, which often needs to be “translated” somewhat. Perhaps the very first written report of UFO activity is one from the year 1796. In his diary, Simeon Perkins made the following entry for Wednesday, 12 October 1796:



described as a "luminous ball of fire that glowed amidst a halo of variegated colours." The object took a quarter of an hour to complete its maneuvers and was watched by many citizens of Rossland.<sup>5</sup>

Moving ahead almost a year, we see the airship making an appearance in the Province of Manitoba:

The "what-is-it?" has been seen in Winnipeg.... Saturday night was the date chosen for the appearance of the airship and the lights of the mysterious machine were in full view of many citizens for full fifteen minutes. The light of the strange aerial vessel came into full view about 9 o'clock on the eastern horizon in the direction of Stony Mountain.... Only the bare outline of some dark object could be seen besides the strong beacon light, evidently shown from the "masthead" of the aerial craft. There can be no doubt of the presence of a strange visitor on Saturday night, as its transit was witnessed by many reputable citizens.

The last point reported from was North Portal, NWT, where about two weeks ago a strange object was noticed in the air, and passed over the town quite as rapidly as the "machine" noticed here on Saturday night.<sup>6</sup>

Later in the summer of 1897, the following appeared under the headline, "A Mysterious Visitor.":

Have you seen the light in the heavens?...if not, you are not up to date. It has been hovering in the skies of Vancouver almost every night this week, and has been viewed by many...Last night the strange object was noticed to the north of the city across the city traveling in an easterly direction. The luminous ball of fire or airship as some call it was closely watched. It approached with great swiftness, paused in midair, then surrounded itself with flashes of colour and moved towards the northeast. At times it looked like a ball of fire at others it had a dull lustre and small particles of fire would shoot from the great glowing mass. N.C. Schon of Burnaby saw the luminous body while on the steamer Rithet on Monday night. He states that it moved parallel to the sea far below the star line and looked like a bright red star surrounded by a luminous halo. It was cigar shaped and seemed to travel slowly and occasionally there seemed to drop a shower of sparks like the sputtering of an arc light.<sup>7</sup>

When the end of 1897 arrived, the UFOs themselves — in this case the airships — were gone, but the phenomenon never does actually go away. Not really. It moves. Or changes. Or as they say so accurately in the television business, it may simply "go on hiatus."

In 1908, the airship phenomenon reappeared. This report, though not exactly from Canada, is from somewhere quite close by:

**IS IT MARS OR AN AIRSHIP? TOWNSPEOPLE OF KENT, WASHINGTON MUCH EXCITED BY MYSTERIOUS LIGHT IN HEAVENS**

# "Prehistoric" UFOs: A Review

By Thomas E. Bullard, PhD.

**Dr. Bullard holds a doctorate in folklore from Indiana University where he wrote his dissertation on UFOs. His last appearance here was a comparative summary of UFO abduction reports.**

What Charles Fort started when he collected old reports of strange aerial phenomena has continued as a distinctive and vigorous branch of ufology today. Historical research lures investigators with the hope of digging out bygone sightings and even unknown fossil evidence for a whole lost world of past observations and beliefs by which to gain a unique perspective on the present. Takers have been many and diligent. The result is a growing but scattered literature too often overlooked and unappreciated. This review will highlight some of the important contributions to pre-1947 historical research.

## PHANTOM AIRSHIPS

The chief focus and biggest find of historical ufology is the phantom airship wave of 1896-97. Fort turned up a few reports from April 1897 in the New York newspapers, and Donald Keyhoe referred to a lighted airship over the Midwest in his list of old sightings in *The Flying Saucers Are Real* (1950). In his first UFO book, *Flying Saucers* (1953), skeptic Donald H. Menzel extended the wave in time and space with reports from California late in 1896. References to these airships became part of a litany recited by many subsequent authors to prove that UFOS were nothing new and by no means discountable in every case as misidentified airplanes.

By the mid-1960s researchers turned from authority to original sources and began to search old newspapers in earnest for airship reports. The extent and complexity of this wave became plain as articles in *FSR* by Jerome

Clark (Jan. - Feb. 1965, July - Aug. 1966, July - Aug. 1967), Lucius Farish (May - June 1965), Clark and Farish (Sept. - Oct. 1968, Jan. - Feb. 1969), Donald B. Hanlon (Sept. - Oct. 1966) and Hanlon and Jacques Vallee (Jan. - Feb. 1967) detailed sightings and landings from a dozen states. Airship articles spread to *Fate* with an article by Farish (Nov. 1966) and a series of three articles there by Clark and Loren Coleman (May - July 1973). Clark and Farish again collaborated during the mid-1970s in articles for Saga's *UFO Report*. Farish carried on a column about historical UFOs with emphasis on 1897 in *Skylook* throughout 1972.

Geographically specialized articles appeared as early as 1938, in the winter issue of *Prairie Schooner*, when Rudolph Umland published an account of the airship over Nebraska, based on WPA research in newspapers from that state. A second article on Nebraska airships, authored by Roger L. Welsch, appeared in the 1979 volume of *Nebraska History*. Robert G. Neeley, Jr. presented an exhaustively researched record of the airship in Illinois in the *Journal of UFO Research* (1979), George M. Eberhart followed the ship through Ohio (*Pursuit*, Winter 1977), and Hanlon's 1966 article covered activity in Texas. Dale M. Titler added a Canadian and Siberian phase to the wave with reports of a stray balloon from the summer and fall of 1897 (see Clark and Farish, *FSR*, Jan. - Feb. 1969), while Loren Gross expanded on this discovery in his book *Charles Fort, the Fortean Society, and UFOs* (1976), and William Retoff gave further details in "The Great Canadian Starship Invasion" (*Ideal's UFO Magazine*, August 1980).

Extended surveys of the 1896 - 97 wave became the norm in many UFO books published during the 1970s, notably John Keel's *UFOs - Opera-*

*tion Trojan Horse* (1970), David Jacobs' *The UFO Controversy in America* (1975), and Paris Flammond's *UFO Exist!* (1976). As the literature has grown, so has the need for self-correction. The Leroy, Kansas, "calfnapping" case made famous by Vallee in *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* (1965) proved to be a hoax when researched in depth by Clark (*Fate*, Feb. 1977), and H. Michael Simmons exposed the equally familiar Aurora, Texas, crash in his article "Once Upon A Time in the West" (*Magonia*, Aug. 1985).

In several books the airships have moved to center stage. They occupy a large fraction of *Mysteries in the Skies: UFOs in Perspective*, by Gordon I.R. Lore and Harold H. Deneau (1968), and Loren Gross devoted *The UFO Wave of 1896* (1974) to a detailed study of the first phase of the wave. The most extensive investigation of sources ever undertaken was completed recently by Robert Neeley, Jr., who spent three years travelling throughout the country searching some 5,000 newspapers for airship reports. His *The Airship Chronicle*, published by the Fund for UFO Research, summarizes the sightings he uncovered in some 2,500 entries and offers a definitive record of the largest of airship waves.

## THEORIES

Interpretation of the airships as something other than spaceships seen through turn-of-the-century eyes has been the focus of several books and articles. Clark and Coleman adapted their findings to a chapter in *The Unidentified* (1975), a book seeking to link UFO phenomena with the psychological archetypes of C.G. Jung. F. Miller's "Jules Verne and the Great Airship Scare" (*IUR* May - June 1979) favors the sociological argument that whatever the ultimate nature of

## Charles Fort actually proves a Johnny-come-lately in historical perspective.

objects may have been, the descriptions derived from expectations of the day. Louis Winkler holds out for the airship being an actual invention on trial (*MUFON UFO Journal*, Mar. 1982), while Daniel Cohen's book, *The Great Airship Mystery* (1981), takes the opposite view that (all the sightings originate in conventional phenomena.) The longest study is Jean Sider's *L'Airship de 1897* (1987), a careful history based on extensive sources. Unlike Cohen, Sider recognizes the dynamic aspects of the wave and traces its spread throughout the country. He analyzes the descriptions along with the context of experimentation and fiction literature, then eliminates alternative explanations to conclude that a legitimate unknown accounts for some of the reports.

### EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS

England joined the airship business with waves in the spring of 1909 and winter of 1913, both discovered by Fort and explored in depth by recent researchers. In *FSR* (Nov. - Dec. 1970, Jan. - Feb. 1971), Carl Grove published his collection of 1909 reports. Paul Screeton followed one newspaper's coverage (*MUFOB*, Summer 1980). David Clarke, Granville Oldroyd and Nigel Watson have just completed a massive catalogue of 1913 newspaper reports for the Fund for UFO Research. These two waves intertwine so closely with fears of German invasion that they have provided ammunition for an interpretation of airships as a form of social panic (Roger Sandell, Peter Rogerson, *MUFOB*, Autumn 1978; Watson, *Magonia*, Spring 1980). Hints that the Russians also shared in the 1913 wave have appeared in *FSR* (Mar. 1984, Feb. 1987).

Scandinavia has been another busy area for UFOs, with "balloon" reports from 1897, phantom airships in 1909, and phantom airplanes during World War I. Then the action really began: An article by David G. Markham in *Doubt* (Jan. 1942) dealt with "ghost

fliers" over Sweden, and John Keel reported in depth on these 1933 - 37 sightings in *FSR* (May - June, July - Aug. 1970; July - Aug., Sept. - Oct. 1971). The "ghost rockets" appeared in 1946 and again received mention in *Doubt* (#16, 17). A survey by Bjorn Overbye was published in *FSR* (May - June, July - Aug. 1970), and Loren Gross devoted a booklet, *The Mystery of the Ghost Rockets* (1974, 2nd ed. 1982), to these reports. Swedish investigators have obtained access to extensive Swedish government files concerning these sightings and are also collecting newspaper reports and interviewing witnesses, so the "ghost" waves promise to be the best-researched of all historical UFO events. Some results have been published by Anders Liljegren (*FSR*, Dec. 1986; nearly every issue of the *AFU Newsletter* [Box 11027, S-600, 11 Norrkoping, Sweden] also contains an article on this work). In 1987 Erlend Sundqvist published *Spokflygarna - 46*, a book devoted mostly to the ghost rockets. The best summary of Swedish research is "The Ghost Rockets," by Liljegren and Clas Svahn, in *UFOs 1947-1987*.

### OTHER WAVES

A summary and bibliography of other waves can be found in Nigel Watson's booklet, *Phantom Aerial Waves and Flaps* (1987), an essential survey of UFO concentrations over the past century and a half. Historical reports not associated with a wave are scattered and difficult to find. Of course Fort's books are major sources, as are the pages of *Doubt* and Carl Pabst's ongoing "Notes of Charles Fort" column in each issue of *Pursuit*. The sourcebooks compiled by William Corliss from old scientific publications carry on Fort's work in a more systematic way, and often provide full texts of reports. Louis Winkler's *Catalogue of UFO-Like Data Before 1947* (Fund for UFO Research, 1984) contains a valuable list of reports as well. Lore and Deneault's *Mysteries in the Skies* and Loren Gross's *Charles Fort, the For-*

*tean Society and UFOs* cover the period from the 1896 wave to 1947 by revealing many unfamiliar reports. The series by Clark and Farish in *UFO Report* also includes some "strays," especially the article on UFOs from the 1920s.

Perhaps the most thorough survey of all is Michel Bougard's *La Chronique des OVNI* (1977), which culls reports for the period 1800-1947 from many UFO publications and lists summaries in chronological order. A survey of historical New Zealand reports by Harold J. Knapman and a similar survey for Australia by Bill Chalker appeared in *UFO Research Australia Newsletter* (Nov. - Dec. 1983). George M. Eberhart's *Geobibliography of Anomalies* includes a great many historical reports from the U.S. and Canada, while from England, David Clarke and Granville Oldroyd concentrate on a particular kind of phenomenon often reported early in the century in their booklet, *Spooklights: A British Survey* (1985).

The UFO literature contains many other old reports, but the reader must look far and wide for these individual cases, some of them accidental discoveries and some the reminiscences of witnesses speaking out after decades. A few examples include Jerome Clark's discussion of a supposed 1884 airship crash in Nebraska (*IUR* Nov. - Dec. 1986), Dwight Whalen's discovery of a mystery airplane over Ontario in 1911 (*Fate* Dec. 1982), and the reprint of a newsclipping about an 1889 airship over Paris, Texas (*Crux* Summer 1985). Madge Brosius Allyn kept secret her observation of a flying "cucumber" in 1903 for 68 year (*Fate* March 1971), Paul T. Collins recalled the 1942 "Battle of Los Angeles" UFO (*Fate* July 1987), while William D. Leet and Leonard H. Stringfield reported their "foo fighter" sightings from World War II (*MUFON UFO Journal* Jan. - Feb. 1979; *Inside Saucer Post ... 3-0 Blue* [1957]).

### PRE-1800

Treatments of aerial phenomena before 1800 are even more hapha-



## TEXAS ODYSSEY OF 1897

by Donald B. Hanlon

BY now, readers of FLYING SAUCER REVIEW will be aware that a wave of sightings occurred throughout the United States in the years 1896-7. Contributions to this journal by Jerome Clark<sup>1</sup>, a pioneer researcher in this area, and the data contained in Vallée's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* (the LeRoy sighting) have brought this period into focus. The results of my own researches<sup>2</sup> into these early observations are partially indicated in Figure 1. Briefly they have convinced me that a wave of **major proportions** occurred, marked by a rather erratic, coast to coast, eastward progression. An interesting characteristic of this wave is that a great many sightings were made over large urban areas, in some instances hovering objects created panic in the city streets (today, of course, we have anti-aircraft facilities for such nuisances). Preliminary investigations (now over 170 reports) encourage me to predict that when all the data has been uncovered, this wave will rival the French wave of the autumn of 1954.

Although far from being an area where a maximum density of these early sightings have as yet been recorded, Texas has produced some of the most important. The following account of a landing appeared in the *Dallas News* of April 28, 1897. The witness was a lawyer who wished to remain unnamed:

"I had been up to old 'Uncle Billy' Gathings to write his will and was driving homeward thinking of the old man and his useful career, and the reward that doubtless awaited him in the good hereafter, when I was astonished by a brilliant flash from an electric searchlight which passed directly over my buggy. I want to tell you also that I was almost frightened to death by it, for it made the space around me as light as day. My horse was also frightened and came near overturning the buggy. He snorted, reared, and plunged madly, trembling meantime like a leaf. My hair stood straight up and I was almost too excited to pay attention to the horse. Fortunately the light rested on us scarcely a second, but glided over the fields and the country till it was suddenly turned upward toward the heavens. Then following it with my eyes, I beheld about 1,000 ft. above me I judge, a huge, black monster, from which the light emanated. It was in shape something like a cigar, but underneath there appeared to be a body similar to the body of a ship, which was attached to the object and from which the light originated. The searchlight was presently shut off, and a number of incandescent lights flashed around the lower edge of the body of the vessel or whatever it was. When I first saw it, it was going very slowly in a southerly direction. The lights were soon entirely extinguished and it glided about three miles this side of the town of Aquila. The vessel or ship steered for the hill, and as it approached it all the lights were again extinguished and the ship disappeared from my sight. I think it may have stopped on the hill.

"I never had anything to so thoroughly work me up, and I resumed my journey home, considering in my mind the strange adventures of the night. I have read and heard much of the airships, but I never expected to see one. I had never seriously thought of them as possible, but in a few minutes I recalled the many stories I have recently seen in the papers about airships and decided that what I had seen was an airship.

"When I was within a mile of Hillsboro, about an hour later, I saw the same object rise from the locality where it disappeared. It ascended till it looked like a mere dark cloud in the skies, when it started in a north-easterly direction and went at a terrific rate of speed. It must have gone at the rate of 100 miles an hour or more. It was headed as near as I can judge toward Dallas, or near there. Every few seconds it would send out brilliant flashes and sparkles, but it travelled most of the time in darkness. Now, gentlemen, I am not prepared by my profession to believe everything I see and hear, but I saw that object and my horse saw it. It almost made both of us frantic. So there is no denying the fact of its existence. The question is, what is it? Man has conquered the ocean, but we are told that the devil is the prince of the air. Again, the scriptures say the devil shall be turned loose for a season. Who knows but what the scripture is being fulfilled right here before our very eyes. It is possible I admit, for man to get up a flying machine, but still, for all that I have seen, I feel curious as to what it was, and can't help it."

This description, which reads like a bad turn-of-the-century novel, gives some indication of the sociological factors which were at work throughout the wave. The appearance of "unknown aerial vehicles" had a profound effect upon the populace. The ramifications have not as yet been fully distinguished. The Wright Brothers were six years away.

One unfortunate factor which must be taken into consideration in these early reports is that journalists of the time were quite prepared to construct an entirely mythical account for publication. This trait was widespread, and considered as a literary exercise of sorts in those days. Many of these accounts are easily recognisable as blatant fakes. However, since seemingly authentic reports also sound quite fantastic to us today, a good deal of analysis will be required before accepting or rejecting a particular incident. Also there is ample evidence to support the belief that there were a considerable number of hoaxes perpetrated by practical jokers of the day, much in the same manner as adolescents and college students staged hoaxes during recent flaps in the United States.

There were a number of humorous accounts in the 1897 reports. For instance, on April 19, an object passed over Farmersville, Texas causing much local comment. One individual claimed to have detected three men on board the craft who were passing out temperance tracts and singing "Nearer My God to Thee"! (Human voices from the airship were

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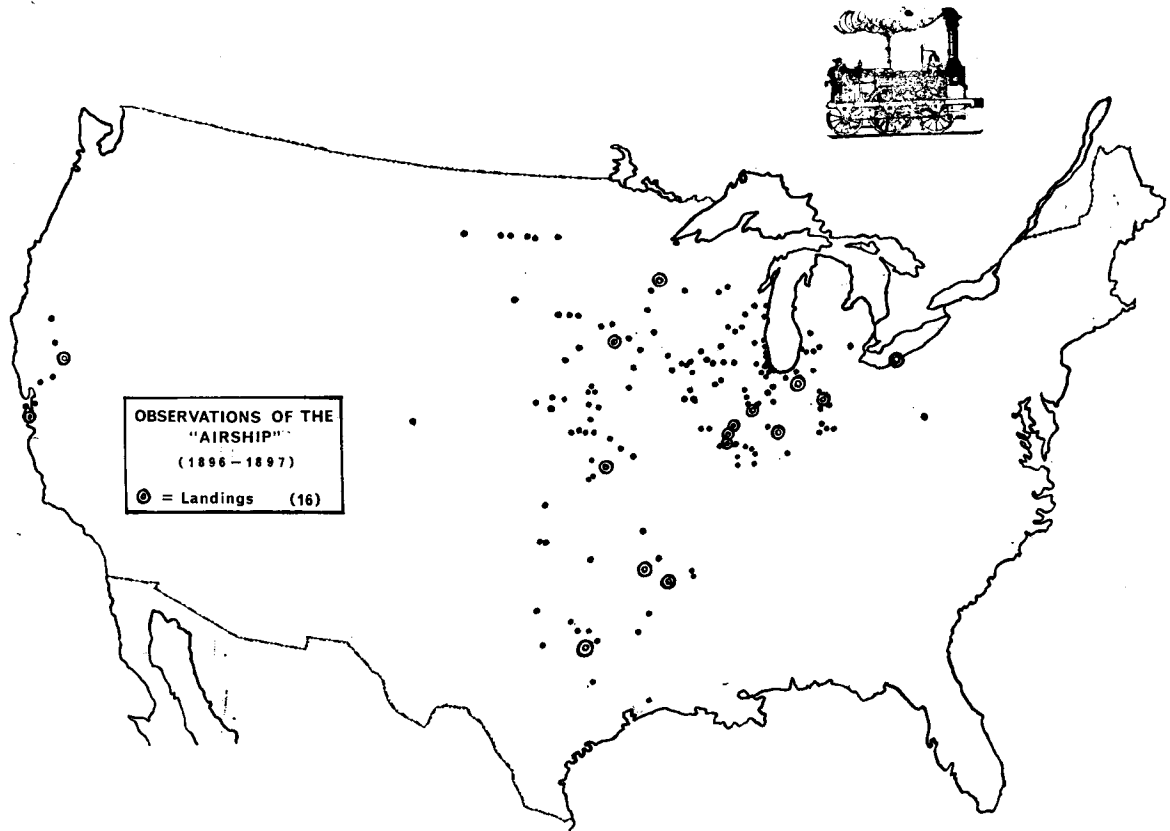


Fig. 1

Based on a sketch by J. Vallee and D. B. Hanlo

supposedly heard at Galesburg, Michigan, on April 3, and also at Vermillion, South Dakota on April 17. Both accounts are mentioned by Clark.) The following appeared in the *Chicago Chronicle* of April 13, 1897, under the headline AIRSHIP SEEN IN IOWA :

"Fontanelle, Iowa—April 12—The airship was seen here at 8.30 tonight, and was viewed by the whole population. It came from the south-east, and was not over 200 feet above the tree tops and moved very slowly, not to exceed ten miles an hour. The machine could be plainly seen, and is described as being sixty feet in length, and the vibration of the wings could be plainly seen. It carried the usual coloured lights, and the working of the machinery could be heard, as also could the strains of music, as from an orchestra. It was hailed, but passed on to the north, seeming to increase its speed, and disappeared. There is no doubt in Fontanelle that it was the real thing, and is testified to by the most prominent citizens among whom are: J. H. Hulbert, S. Shoemaker, J. I. McCampbell, ex-mayor Dr. D. B. Scott, Editor McClure and others. The weather was very cloudy, and it has been raining lightly all evening, so it could not possibly have been a star."

When reviewed collectively these curious incidents begin to lose some of their humour and assume a weird quality.

Taking into consideration the various negative and positive factors inherent in the 1897 reports, we cautiously present the following, taken from the April 19 edition of the *Dallas Morning News* :

"Aurora, Wise County, April 17—About 6 o'clock this morning the early risers of Aurora were astonished at the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing throughout the country.

"It was travelling due north and much nearer the earth than before. Evidently some of the machinery was out of order, for it was making a speed of only 10 or 12 miles an hour and gradually settling toward the earth.

"It sailed directly over the public square, and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank, and destroying the judge's flower garden.

"The pilot of the ship is supposed to have been the only one aboard, and while his remains are badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not an inhabitant of this world.

"Mr. J. T. Weems, the U.S. Signal Service Officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he (the pilot) was a native of the Planet Mars.

"Papers found on his person—evidently the records of his travels—are written in some unknown hieroglyphics and cannot be deciphered. (A distinct resemblance here to the "1864 Martian Hoax" discussed by Vallée in the revised *Ace* edition of *Anatomy* p.174, and more recently the Brooksville "hoax" discussed by Charles Bowen, *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* July/August 1965 p. 6.—D.B.H.)

"This ship was badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power. It was built of an unknown metal, resembling somewhat a

mixture of aluminium and silver and it must have weighed several tons.

"The town is full of people today who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon tomorrow." (The pilot's epitaph must have been quite special!—D.B.H.)

After reading a report such as this, one has the impulse to either burst into gales of laughter or head for Texas with spade and shovel!

Some substance is given to this report by a similar event which occurred on April 10 at Winamac, Indiana. The airship allegedly hovered directly over the centre of town before moving off, displaying red, blue, and white lights, with a terrific lunge toward the "Pink Mink Marshes." It stopped directly over the marshes and was seen to quiver, after which an explosion tore off the wings. It then began to settle, slowly at first, then "at the speed of a bullet." It struck the softest part of the marshes and sank out of sight with a gurgling noise. It was also reported that two mysterious "tramps" who had been "stealing a ride on the airship" were killed.

We now proceed to another fantastic report, taken from the April 28 edition of the *Houston Daily Post*:

"Merkel, Texas, April 26—Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a rope attached.

"They followed it until, in crossing the railroad, it caught on a rail. On looking up they saw what they supposed was the airship. (This feature seems to be directly related to a report from Sioux City, Iowa on March 29, 1897, in which a farmer, Robert Hibbard, was pulled several rods distance after being hooked by a grapple which was attached to a drag rope dangling from the rear of 'an airship'. The grapple finally ripped through his trousers depositing him in a cow lot.—Just fishing, I suppose.—D.B.H.)

"It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several windows; one bright light in front like the headlight of a locomotive.

"After some ten minutes, a man was seen descending the rope; he came near enough to be plainly seen; he wore a *light blue sailor suit and was small in size*. (My italics.—D.B.H.)

"He stopped when he discovered parties at the anchor, and *cut the rope* below him and sailed off in a north-east direction. The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliot and Miller and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people."

This account sounds much too familiar to be taken lightly.

Drake<sup>3</sup> and Wilkins<sup>4</sup> relate rather garbled accounts of "cloud ships" whose "anchors" allegedly caught on some terrestrial snag in either Kent or Ireland (ca. AD 1211 or earlier) according to which account you prefer. The Irish account runs as follows:

"There happened in the borough of Cloera, one Sunday, while the people were at Mass, a marvel. In this town is a church dedicated to St. Kinarus. It befell that an anchor was dropped from the sky, with a rope attached to it, and one of the flukes caught in the arch above the church door. The people rushed out of the church and saw in the sky a ship with men on board, floating before the anchor cable, and they saw a man leap overboard and jump down to the anchor, as if to release it. He looked as if he

were swimming in water. The folk rushed up and tried to seize him; but the bishop forbade the people to hold the man, for it might kill him, he said. The man was freed, and hurried up to the ship, where the crew cut the rope and the ship sailed away out of sight. But the anchor is in the church, and has been ever since, as a testimony."

The Kentish account comes from Gervase of Tilbury's *Otis Imperialia*, in which it is related that an anchor from a "cloud ship" became fastened in a mound of stones in a churchyard at Gravesend. Voices from above were heard, and the cable connected to the anchor was seen to move as if an attempt to free the anchor was being made. A man of human proportions, was observed to slide down the cable, after which he cut the cable and ascended (or died from suffocation as one account has it) leaving the anchor behind.

What connection do the "celestial sailor" of ancient Eire and/or Kent, have with the little man in the blue sailor suit of Merkel, Texas? The similarities are strange, in fact, downright suspicious. The dates and locations of the English and Irish stories could, and should, be clarified.

The mention of "anchors" remind one of the Gulliver device, developed by G. V. Levan and N. H. Horwitz. This device was designed as a means to secure and analyse Martian soil samples when an instrument package is landed on that planet's surface. Projectiles which are shot out to a distance of 25 feet, are attached to the device by strings coated with an adhesive material. The projectiles are

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then reeled back, and any material adhering to the string is analysed in the device." One could speculate that the "anchors" of the cloud-and-air ships may have served a similar purpose.

Mr. Frank Masquelette of the *Houston Post* has done an admirable job in researching the 1897 reports from Texas. In following up the Merkel account Mr. Masquelette states :

"Recent enquiries among old-timers in Merkel have turned up no one who could remember anything about the incident, if indeed there was one.

"Several people, though, readily recognised the name of Elliot and Miller. The blacksmith shop occupied a building facing the railroad track. The building is now used by an International Harvester Company dealer as a warehouse.

Mrs. Elaine Brumbeau, editor of the *Merkel Mail* recently ran an item asking if anyone knew anything about the airship incident. There have been no replies."

And for the Aurora incident :

"Gene Carter publisher of the *Wise County Messenger*, learned that there was a Judge Proctor who

used to live in the Aurora area. But that is the only part of the story that anyone recognised.

"Two life-long residents of the Aurora area—Miss Mag Morris and Mrs. Lou Inman (88 and 93 respectively)—scoffed at the story."

If the link with present day UFO sightings is as strong as it would seem, then, by comparison, the Phenomenon itself was in primitive state. This consideration has led those of us researching the period to believe that the "key" to the UFO Phenomenon may well be found among these reports. Oddly enough it may be that we are closer to "proving something" with the 1896-7 Airship Phenomenon than with the post 1945 UFO Phenomenon !

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> FLYING SAUCER REVIEW: January/ February 1965 and July/ August 1966.

<sup>2</sup> *Enigma of the Airship* by Donald B. Hanlon—to be published.

<sup>3</sup> *Spacemen in the Middle Ages* by W. R. Drake—FLYING SAUCER REVIEW May/June 1964.

<sup>4</sup> *Flying Saucers on the Attack* by H. T. Winkins, p. 160-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Sourcebook on the Space Sciences* by Samuel Glasstone, p. 721.

<sup>6</sup> *Claims made of UFO Evidence* by Frank Masquelette—*The Houston Post* June 13, 1966.

#### Advanced Life on the Planet Earth ?

Although the Mariner IV space probe which took photographs of the surface of Mars was designed for geological and not biological reconnaissance, it has been suggested that the absence of signs of advanced life in the 22 photographs (whose resolution was a few kilometres) tends to confirm that such life does not exist. S. D. Kilston and his colleagues, at Harvard College and the Goddard Space Flight Centre have tried examining photographs of the Earth for signs of our own civilisation (*Icarus*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 79).

Although several hundred thousand suitable photographs of the Earth have been taken by the Tiros and Nimbus meteorological satellites, only three of the high resolution pictures showed signs which were indicative of an advanced civilisation on Earth : a recently completed inter-state highway could be seen on one ; another photograph showed the condensation trail left by a jet aircraft ; and a third showed a rectilinear grid pattern, subsequently found to be due to the activities of Canadian lumber men, which was thought by Kilston to be a clear indication of advanced life. A fourth photograph, however, contained what appeared to be the most convincing sign of advanced civilisation—a long straight breakwater on the Moroccan coast which in fact proved to be a natural peninsular.

\* \* \* \*

(Our thanks to Peter Haythornthwaite for drawing our attention to this item in the *New Scientist* of April 21, 1966.)

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F5R, VOL. 16, N<sup>o</sup> 4, JULY - AUGUST 1970

# THE AIRSHIP . . . FACT AND FICTION

Donald B. Hanlon



IN an important book, *Mysteries of the Skies* by Gordon Lore, Jr., and Harold Deneault, Jr., the authors devote themselves to a review of pre-1947 UFO sightings and in so doing have presented much new and significant material.

Of particular interest are the first two chapters which deal with the 1896-97 airship sightings. The authors are apparently totally unaware of the discussions of these sightings which have been presented in the pages of this REVIEW since 1965. This is indeed unfortunate since much of their material complements and in many cases substantiates that which has been presented here.

In their "Appendix C" the authors have included a chart of bright planet positions for November 1896-June 1897 which I have found most helpful in eliminating a number of "sightings" possibly caused by astronomical bodies. It was found that Venus could have been a major culprit.

Also included is a list of towns and cities<sup>1</sup> from which the authors have found reports. As a result of my researches into the mid-western states I might add the following locations<sup>2</sup>:

**Illinois**  
Arcola  
Arrowsmith  
Cabery  
Downs  
El Paso  
Greenfield  
Hillsboro  
Lake Forrest

Minonk  
Moline  
Mt. Morris  
Nashville  
Paris  
Quincy  
Rock Island  
Springfield  
Vandalia

**Indiana**  
Anderson  
Batesville  
Gas City

Hope  
Muncie  
Wabash  
Winemac

**Iowa**  
Belle Plain  
Cedar Rapids  
Green Island  
Jefferson

Linn Grove  
Northwood  
Reinbeck  
Solon

**Kansas**  
Belleville  
Emporia  
Eureka  
Everest

Haddam  
Kiowa  
Leavenworth  
Marysville  
Washington

**Nebraska**  
Beatrice  
Hastings  
Grand Island

Kearney  
Quovale  
York

**Wisconsin**  
Darlington  
Eau Claire  
Fond du Lac  
Grand Rapids  
Lodi

Manitowoc  
Palmyra  
Rio  
Sheboygan  
West Superior

**Michigan**  
Ann Arbor

Battle Creek

As I have stated previously,<sup>3</sup> there were a number of factors at work at that period which hinder the evaluation of the reports. Aside from misidentification due to astronomical causes, there were:

1. Entirely mythical accounts written by journalists for publication as actual fact (Lore and Deneault quote newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst to this effect).

2. A considerable number of admitted hoaxes, including what could be termed the first fake "UFO" photograph in the history of the subject (*Chicago Chronicle*, April 13, 1897).

3. Spurious claims by several individuals of having "invented the airship" (this particular hindrance has been brought into focus as Lore and Deneault have published two patents for an airship taken from the files of the U.S. Patent Office for 1896-97).

An excellent example of an admitted hoax which, incidentally, Lore and Deneault have apparently taken at face value and treated as an authentic landing, is described in the April 17, 1897, edition of the *Chicago Record*:

"Waterloo, Iowa—April 17—Waterloo made the discovery early this morning that an airship was anchored on the west bank of the Cedar river, just inside the city limits, and the citizens thronged to the spot. The ship was constructed of canvas, heavily painted and tightly stitched to a light framework of wood. The principal parts of the concern were two large cigar-shaped balloons, each 36ft. in length, and about 8ft. in diameter at the swell. These lay side by side and slightly elevated between them was the cabin, and inside of this were the compressors and generators with which the man guarding the machine seemed to be perfectly familiar. No opportunity was given anyone to inspect the machinery, and any attempt to cross the rope fence which he had erected was met by an order to stay out.

"Visitors came hastening from all parts of the city, as the news spread rapidly. It was but a few moments until the telephone and telegraph wires were busy receiving messages from outside towns asking for information on the latest airship. So well did the man guard his treasure, and so clearly did he tell the story of how he, in company with a Mr. Stormont, left San Francisco on March 20, and gave every detail up to the time of landing, that fully half of the 5,000 people who visited the place today doubted the truth of the

matter when it leaked out this afternoon. The affair was built by a practical joker who has spent more than a week constructing it, and when completed and placed on the ground in the night not half a dozen persons beside the inventor knew anything about it. The grounds around it are crowded tonight, and people are coming in from a distance expecting to see the 'airship' continue on its journey. When told that one man had fallen overboard just before landing a searching party was organised by some of the more credulous, and a start was made at dragging the river for his remains, when it was discovered that the entire affair was a joke."

It will be seen that pranksters in 1897 were prepared to go to elaborate lengths to have their fun.

The patents, and the newspaper stories concerning one of them, discovered by the authors are anything but convincing.<sup>1</sup> Such patents in the "Machine Age" were a dime a dozen, and no individual has ever stepped forward with conclusive proof that he had mastered heavier-than-air flight. Among the various individuals in the Midwest who claimed to have invented "the airship" we have an A. C. Clinton who claimed he would give a demonstration of his machine at the trans-Mississippi exposition on April 17; he never showed up. A certain Mr. Carr made a deal with the famous Ringling Brothers' circus to demonstrate the airship designed by one F. Meyer at a ticketed performance. At the time agreed upon neither Mr. Carr nor the airship could be located.

A more interesting story of an inventor's claim was reported or concocted by a correspondent in the April 11, 1897, *Chicago Chronicle*:

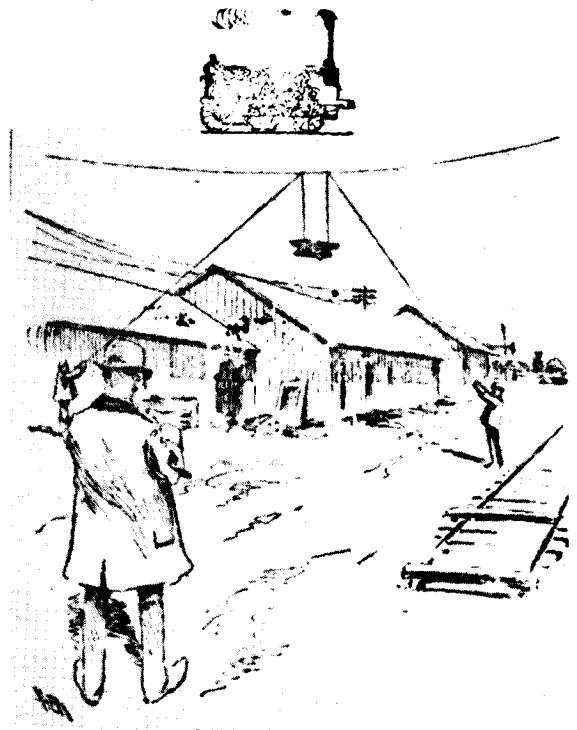
"Taylors Falls, Minnesota, April 10—The famous airship has been found near here. Upon receipt of a bulletin from Minneapolis, your correspondent hastened to the thick woods south of town. He penetrated them with great care. Moving cautiously he came to the edge of a considerable clearing in which he saw lying an immense and curiously shaped object, which looked like a whale at a distance of five feet. At first I feared that it might be some animate thing of terrible proportions. A little observation assured me that it was something of metal and wood. Suddenly a door opened and two men came out of the ship's side. They were reading daily papers and laughing at the surprise and wonder their ship had created. At that moment I rushed out at them. Seeing me they came at me like wild beasts, but I drew a revolver and warned them to stand and deliver their secret. Thereupon one of them introduced himself as J. S. McMasters of Chicago and admitted that he was the inventor of the craft that had excited so much wonder.

"There she is," he said. "There remain some little things to perfect before we make our discovery known. We will never reveal the secret, but we will soon put on lines of airships between all the principal points in the world. Each trip serves to correct some defect.

"All that I can say to you is that the principle on which our invention rests is that of *negative gravity*' (my italics, D.B.H.) 'as opposed to the positive kind with which we are all familiar.'

"While I was asking him some question the wheels on the thing began to revolve, great wingle projections unfolded, and some mysterious force drew the men into the car on the lower side and before my eyes the thing rose and sailed away down the St. Croix.

"The town is full of farmers who saw the mysterious object and came into town to discuss it. The prevailing belief is that it is the devil's own creation. When I told them my story they all said I was crazy and locked me up. I am writing this from the jail, but I am as sane as any man and never write a fake any more than Sioux City and Omaha reporters."



Preparing the 1897 fake!

These are typical of the spurious claims which were rampant at this period. However we do have some evidence that a serious attempt to emulate the behaviour of the real and quite mysterious airship by certain responsible inventors on the West Coast. In an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, April 10, Max L. Harmar, Secretary of the Chicago Aeronautical Association (whose president was aviation pioneer Octave Chanute), claimed to have a good idea of what was behind the mysterious sightings.

He claimed that Chanute was at that time in California as he was one of a number of wealthy men who were financing the building of an airship. The craft was said to have started a cross-country journey with the eventual destination being Washington, D.C. It was to land in Chicago, however, for purposes of registration, and a reception was being planned by Mr. Harmar. Needless to say, Mr. Harmar was disappointed as the craft observed in that area showed no signs of landing for the festivities. Later it was learned that the California airship that Mr. Chanute had been backing crashed after a very unsuccessful attempt at aerial navigation.

After sifting through data such as the above, one is left with a hard core of sightings (now over 200) of a rather unlikely looking aerial craft which created much commotion among the observers. The only detectable effect which the sightings left on the society of 1896-97 is exactly the same as that left by the modern UFO phenomenon—a psychological impact.

It is clear that the origin of the airship is still very much an open issue. It is also clear that the mystery surrounding its appearance at that particular time in history has deepened.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lore and Deneault: *Mysteries from the Skies*, pps. 24-25.  
<sup>2</sup> Refer to map in FSR September/October 1966, p. 9.  
<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.  
<sup>4</sup> Lore and Deneault, pps. 16-17, 38-39.

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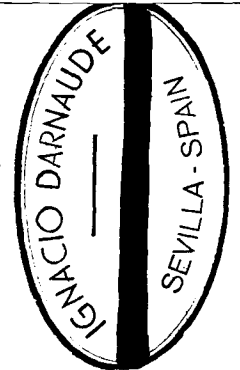
FSR, N<sup>o</sup> 1, 1967



# AIRSHIPS OVER TEXAS

A contribution to the study of the 1896-1897 wave

by Donald B. Hanlon and Jacques Vallée



CONSIDERABLE attention has recently been devoted to the 1896-97 American wave<sup>1, 2</sup>. This phase of UFO activity had first been recognised by Fort<sup>3</sup> and has been discussed in books by Keyhoe<sup>4</sup>, Ruppelt<sup>5</sup> as well as in more recent publications<sup>6</sup>. But it is only in the last few months that it began to be really clarified. Although Dr. J. Allen Hynek had called attention to the dramatic Leroy episode<sup>7</sup> as early as 1960, it was not until the publication of the story in 1965 by one of the authors<sup>8</sup> that a full-scale study of the wave was undertaken. This long-needed investigation has produced an unprecedented amount of data. At the same time, most researchers interested in this aspect of the mystery have found themselves in complete agreement regarding the very high significance of the new data so suddenly brought to light.

An important remark that has been presented in the pages of the REVIEW by Clark<sup>1</sup> is that "the 1897 wave indicates the futility of any attempt to divorce flying objects from the general situation in which they operate." It is quite clear that the similarities which had been noted between the behaviour of the 1897 airships and modern observations must now be regarded with caution.

The fact remains, of course, that many features of the 1897 sightings closely parallel UFO behaviour during the major waves of the post-war period. It is striking to read in Clark's article that an object seen on April 10, 1897 "dropped what looked like a parachute with a light attached to it", an observation we have come to regard as typical in the French sightings of 1954 and which is also found time and again in the American files—for instance in the recent Exeter case<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, the high proportion of "occupant" cases, and the pattern observed in Type I reports (not to mention such obvious features as the reported size of the objects, or the relationship between light frequency and acceleration), tend actually to support earlier claims that we are dealing precisely with the same type of objects—that the airships are UFOs in the modern sense. What is entirely disturbing is the reported behaviour of the operators and the appearance (which Clark with reason calls "almost ludicrous") of the vehicles themselves.

Accordingly, the purpose of the present article is twofold:

- (i) To further document the analysis of that period by presenting a series of thirty sightings, most of them unpublished.
- (ii) To show how the patterns already observed by Clark<sup>1</sup> and Hanlon<sup>2</sup> are further substantiated as the acquisition of new evidence progresses.

### Observational material

For convenience, we give in table form the dates and sources for the accounts which we describe in detail below in chronological order. All these sightings were made in a twelve day period and within two hundred miles of Fort Worth, Texas (see map).

1. 'That Denton is not behind the other towns and cities in North Texas is shown by the fact that the mysterious airship of which so much has been said and written in the last few days, has been seen here by at least two credible persons, one a gentleman and the other a lady, whose reputation for truthfulness cannot be assailed.' The airship is described as cigar-shaped with a light, moving slowly. Then it accelerated "at a terrific rate." There was a row of windows along the side. One witness observed it through a marine telescope and said "I do not doubt that it was an airship." It was said to be about fifty feet long.
2. Weatherford: "Last night at 9 o'clock the airship that has been mentioned in *The News* from Oklahoma and other points, was seen here. It passed over the city in a south-westerly direction and lights were thrown out from the front, resembling the headlight of an engine. The machine was seen here by many people."
3. "Various and truthful citizens of Corsicana today declared that the airship, which has received not a little mention in the press this week, passed over the city last night. It was described by one, who is emphatic in the statement that he saw it, as being a bright light a long distance from the earth and was moving at rather a fast speed across the firmament."
4. A man from Ennis said that he saw the airship the previous night from Fort Worth.
5. Paris: several persons saw the airship, including J. A. Black, a nightwatchman. He got a good look at it and described it as cigar-shaped, 200 feet long, with sails or wings outstretched on either side. A dog howled until the airship passed from sight.
6. Sherman: 'The mysterious aerial navigator that has caused so much newspaper comment recently has been sighted by W. S. Hellier of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad at this place. This is what Mr. Hellier says about it: "I was standing on the pavement on the north side of the public square last night about 10 o'clock when I noticed a dark object begin to pass between the

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TABLE

Case identification						Source	
remarks	No.	Date	Time	Place	Witness	Dallas Morning News	Houston Post
meteor ?	1	About 13		Denton		15 April, 1897	
	2	14 April	2100	Weatherford		16 April	
	3	night 14-15		Corsicana		16 April	
	4	night 14-15		Fort Worth		17 April	
	5	night 15-16		Paris	Black Hellier	17 April	
	6	15 April	2200	Sherman		17 April	18 April
	7	16 April		Farmersville		18 April	
	8	16 April	2130	Granbury	Gresham Smith	19 April	
	9	17 April	0116	Childress			22 April
	10	17 April		Texarkana		18 April	
misquote	11	17 April		Garland		18 April	
	12	17 April		Bonham		18 April	
	13	17 April		Cleburne		18 April	
	14	17 April		Tioga		18 April	
	15	17 April		Mansfield		18 April	
	16	17 April		Ladonia		18 April	
	17	17 April		Forney		18 April	
	18	17 April		Stephenville		19 April	
	19	17 April		Waxahachie		19 April	
	20	17 April		Greenville		19 April	
accident	21	17 April	0600	Aurora	Weems	19 April	
	22	night 17-18		Bryan			20 April
	23	night 18-19	0010	Atlanta	Nelson		22 April
	24	19 April	2130	Longview			22 April
	25	19 April	2330	Belton			22 April
landing	26	19 April		Groesbeck	Johnson		22 April
	27	22 April	2330	Rockland	Barclay		22 April
landing mistake	28	night 22-23	2400	Josserand	Nicholas		26 April
	29	night 25-26		Pine Valley			28 April
	30	night 25-26		Merkel			28 April

earth and the moon. At first I thought it was a cloud, but I noticed at the same time that it was perfectly shaped. The object was going eastward and not apparently at any great rate of speed. It was an elongated oval, perhaps six times its diameter in length. After it passed by the moon I saw no more of it."

7. Farmersville: Several persons saw the airship. Two said they saw men on board. One said he could clearly hear them singing "Nearer My God to Thee". He said they were distributing temperance tracts.

8. Granbury: Newt Gresham at 9.30 p.m. was drilling the Riddle Rifles when the airship approached. He ordered the company to fire on the object. It later disappeared.

9. Childress: 'The much-talked-of airship was seen here last night about 1:16 o'clock. Rev. J. W. Smith was the first to discover the curious aerial monster. He thought at first that it was a star shooting, but after watching it a moment or two, saw that it was not. He then called to his mother-in-law, Mr. Charley Norris, and also called to Mr. Bates and wife, near neighbours, who were up at the time. Charles Norris ran over to his mother's and called out several members of the family, who saw the ship. It soon disappeared, travelling in a westerly direction. Rev. Smith thinks it must have been 2,000 feet high and travelling very fast.'

10. Texarkana: A telegraph operator at Hope, Ark., said he saw the airship. It is not clear whether he saw it from Hope or from Texarkana.

11. Garland: A man said he saw wings on sides and back of cigar-shaped object.

12. Bonham: Several saw ship pass and heard motors.

13. Cleburne: Sighting of the airship. No details given.

14. Tioga: Sighting, no details.

15. Mansfield: Airship was said to be cigar-shaped with wings on either side. Had a front end headlight. Side lights were green with bright red light in rear.

16. Ladonia: A sighting was mentioned, but the News several days later ran a correction which said that the man had been misquoted; that he had not seen the airship.

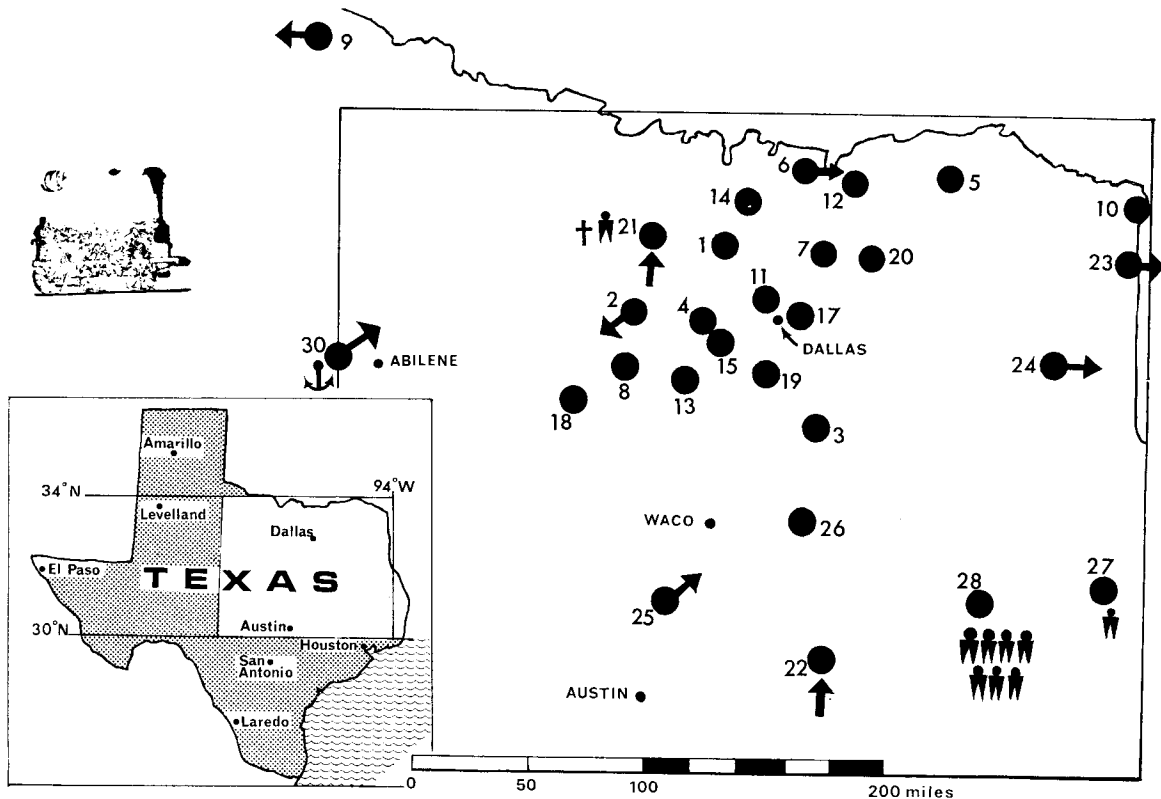
17. Forney: Sighting of the airship. No details given.

18, 19, 20. Stories from Stephenville, Waxahachie and Greenville say that people have talked to crewmen of the airship.

21. Aurora: 'About 6 o'clock this morning the early risers of Aurora were astonished at the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing throughout the country. It was travelling due north, and much nearer the earth than before. Evidently some of the machinery was out of order, for it was making a speed of only ten or twelve miles an hour, and gradually settling toward the earth. It sailed over the public square and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank and destroying the judge's flower garden. The

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pilot of the ship is supposed to have been the only one aboard, and while his remains are badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not an inhabitant of this world. Mr. T. J. Weems, the U.S. Signal Service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he was a native of the planet Mars. Papers found on his person—evidently the records of his travels—are written in some unknown hieroglyphics, and cannot be deciphered. This ship was too badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power. It was built of an unknown metal, resembling somewhat a mixture of aluminium and silver, and it must have weighed several tons. The town today is full of people who are viewing the wreckage and gather specimens of strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon tomorrow. Signed: E. E. Haydon.' (see note 10).

22. Bryan: 'A number of Bryan people claim to have seen the mysterious airship pass over that town Saturday night. It was going north.'

23. Atlanta: 'There was considerable excitement here today, caused by a visitation last night by the mysterious airship. It was first seen by Jim Nelson, a farmer, living one and a half miles west of here. He had walked out into his yard just after midnight, when his attention was attracted by a peculiar noise and looking up he discovered the mysterious aerial traveller. It seemed to be descending straight to the earth with great rapidity and Mr. Nelson's hair stood out with fright, as he mistook it for a meteor and momentarily expected it to strike the earth, explode and blow himself, his family and earthly possessions into eternity. But when within two or three hundred feet of the earth it paused for an instant, coming to a sudden stop, almost like a heavy weight fall-

ing until it reached the end of a rope sustaining it, then it moved off at a rate of speed about equal to that of an ordinary passenger train, in the direction of this city. Having read in the papers of an airship appearing at different places, he decided this must be the mysterious stranger and having telephone connection with this city, he immediately rang up central and reported what he had seen.

'Mr. Boothe, the telephone manager, being in the office, looked out for the airship, which made its appearance on time. While passing over the city it was seen by many of the best citizens. Lee Wicks, night policeman, saw it distinctly and describes it as being about thirty feet long and the body or hull being about the proportions and shape of a skiff, and seemed to be propelled by revolving wheels and fitted with sails to guide its course. Both Mr. Wicks and Mr. Boothe agree in their description of the ship, and both believe the motor power to be electricity.

'Dr. Crossly, Jack Bangus, Dr. Connelly, Chess Mayes, Tom Swint, Dick Hogan, Paul Dunklin, R. T. Cope and Mr. Huffmaster, night operator, all are reported to have seen the ship, and verify the statement and description given by Boothe and Wicks. When first seen by Jim Nelson, there were only faint gleams of red, green and blue, lights showing, but just after starting off horizontally it shot out a glaring gleam of white light, which was directed towards the earth in front of the airship at an angle of about 45 degrees and lighted a circle of about thirty feet diameter as bright or brighter than the noonday sun. This great light and its wonderful power is supposed to have been a searchlight. While passing over this city the speed of the airship was from five to fifteen miles an hour. It slowed up just before reaching the business part of the city and in passing over this portion

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its speed was not above five miles an hour. It was traveling almost due east and the stream of light was shut off just after passing the city limits. The opinions regarding this mysterious ship are about as numerous as the population. Some who did not see it are inclined to brand the story as a fake, but the character of the men who saw it cannot be questioned. It is impossible to give all the opinions, but one that seems worthy of consideration is that the airship is the property of a gang of crackmen, who by the aid of the searchlight and X-rays, under the management of scientific experts, sail over a town and look through the walls of the houses and bank vaults and locate the booty; that they return on a later date and secure it, and then disappear by the aid of their airship. Another solution offered is that it is an exploring party sent out by some other planet. The most plausible theory seems to be that some inventor has succeeded in solving the problem of aerial navigation and with a party of his friends is out on an aerial trip.

24. Longview: 'Last night about 9.30, the *Post* correspondent and family on returning from church saw the so-called airship. A bright light, seemingly about the size of Venus, moved swiftly to the Northwest, disappearing beneath the horizon. In a few minutes it reappeared rising nearly to the zenith and rapidly traversed the heavens in an easterly direction. The light emitted a series of intermittent flashes of a steel colour. No car was seen.'

25. Belton: 'Last night quite a crowd of responsible people of this place assembled for the purpose of watching for that much-talked-of airship and at 11.30 o'clock it was seen coming from the southwest at an immense velocity. It dipped and but for the fact of bearing just a little to the left of the "New Surprise" show tent, directly in front of Peay's hotel, the tent would have suffered great injury, judging from the velocity of the ship. Missing the tent, it passed by the northwest corner of Peay's hotel and rising passed from view. The passengers on board their aerial wonder spoke as they passed, but could not be understood on account of the velocity. Belton people have been sceptical heretofore, but they now believe. The race was so swift that no proper estimate could be formed as to the dimensions; however, about ten persons were distinctly seen.'

26. Groesbeck: 'Mr. B. F. Johnson saw the mysterious airship last night, as did several of his neighbours.'

27. Rockland: 'Mr. John M. Barclay, living near this place, reports that last night about 11 o'clock, after having retired, he heard his dog barking furiously, together with a whining noise. He went to the door to ascertain the trouble and saw something, he says, that made his eyes bulge out and but for the fact that he had been reading of an airship that was supposed to have been in or over Texas, he would have taken to the woods. It was a peculiar shaped body, with an oblong shape, with wings and side attachments of various sizes and shapes. There were brilliant lights, which appeared much brighter than electric lights. When he first saw it, it seemed perfectly stationary about five yards from the ground. It circled a few times and gradually descended to the ground in a pasture adjacent to his house. He took his Winchester and went down to investigate. As soon as the ship, or whatever it might be, alighted, the lights went out. The night was bright enough for a man to be distinguished several yards, and when within about thirty yards of the ship he was met by an ordinary mortal, who requested him to lay his gun aside as no harm was intended. Whereupon the following conversation ensued: Mr. Barclay enquired: 'Who are you and what do you want?'—'Never mind about my name, call it Smith. I want some lubricating oil and a couple

of cold chisels if you can get them, and some bluestone. I suppose the saw mill hard by has the two former articles and the telegraph operator has the bluestone. Here is a ten-dollar bill; take it and get us these articles and keep the change for your trouble.'

Mr. Barclay said: "What have you got down there? Let me go and see it." He who wanted to be called Smith said: "No, we cannot permit you to approach any nearer, but do as we request you and your kindness will be appreciated, and we will call you some future day and reciprocate your kindness by taking you on a trip."

Mr. Barclay went and procured the oil and cold chisels, but could not get the bluestone. They had no change and Mr. Barclay tendered him the ten-dollar bill, but same was refused. The man shook hands with him and thanked him cordially and asked that he not follow him to the vessel. As he left Mr. Barclay called him and asked him where he was from and where he was going. He replied "from anywhere, but we will be in Greece day after tomorrow." He got on board, when there was again the whirling noise, and the thing was gone, as Mr. Barclay expresses it, like a shot out of a gun. Mr. Barclay is perfectly reliable.

28. Jossierand: 'Considerable excitement prevails at this writing in this usually quiet village of Jossierand, caused by a visit of the noted airship, which has been at so many points of late. Mr. Frank Nichols, a prominent farmer living about two miles east of here, and a man of unquestioned veracity, was awakened night before last near the hour of twelve by a whirling noise similar to that made by machinery. Upon looking out he was startled upon beholding brilliant lights streaming from a ponderous vessel of strange proportions, which rested upon the ground in his cornfield.'

'Having read the despatches published in the *Post* of the noted aerial navigators, the truth at once flashed over him that he was one of the fortunate ones and with all the bravery of Priam at the siege of Troy Mr. Nichols started out to investigate. Before reaching the strange midnight visitor he was accosted by two men with buckets who asked permission to draw water from his well. Thinking he might be entertaining heavenly visitors instead of earthly mortals, permission was readily granted. Mr. Nichols was kindly invited to accompany them to the ship. He conversed freely with the crew, composed of six or eight individuals about the ship. The machinery was so complicated that in his short interview he could gain no knowledge of its workings. However, one of the crew told him the problem of aerial navigation had been solved. The ship or car is built of a newly-discovered material that has the property of self-sustenance in the air, and the motive power is highly condensed electricity. He was informed that five of these ships were built at a small town in Iowa. Soon the invention will be given to the public. An immense stock company is now being formed and within the next year the machines will be in general use. Mr. Nichols lives at Jossierand, Trinity County, Texas, and will convince any incredulous one by showing the place where the ship rested.'

29. Pine Valley: 'The airship—the genuine, real live thing—was seen last night by several parties whose word is far beyond question and of whom some of the most responsible persons in the community. They were at church when it was seen from the inside through a window; considerable excitement prevailed. It appeared to be a long distance off, at an angle of about 45 degrees from where the crowd was standing, moving very slowly; was of cigar shape, as has so often been described; had two large wings on each

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side; one set was just in front and slightly overlapped the rear set, but appeared to be a great deal larger. The colour of the object seemed to be of a yellowish brown, a bit different than other accounts. The propeller was at the bow and, as well as the crowd could distinguish it, was made of long paddles, even as long as the ship itself. The much-heard-of searchlight was on the stern of the ship and appeared to cover the entire stern. It seemed to be a very large light and it would go out and relight at regular intervals. This was explained by some to be a disinclination of its navigators to being perceived, that it merely turned on the light occasionally to discover their whereabouts. The light was a deep golden colour and some of the observing party declared they could see plainly enough to have picked up a fly on the floor had there been no other light in the house. At this juncture, the ship had almost gone out of sight from the window and the crowd decided to look at it, but when they got outside it was nowhere to be seen. Upon returning and making more careful observation they found it to be a lightning-bug or fire-fly crawling slowly across the window-pane.

30. Merkel: 'Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a large rope attached. They followed it until crossing the railroad it caught on a rail. On looking up they saw what they supposed was the airship. It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several wings. One bright light in front like the headlight of a locomotive. After some 10 minutes a man was seen descending the rope: he came near enough to be plainly seen; he wore a light blue sailor suit, was small in size. He stopped when he discovered parties at the anchor and cut the rope below him and sailed off in a north-east direction. The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliott & Miller and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people.'

### Discussion

On the basis of several detailed descriptions of the airships seen at close range, descriptions that use such terms as 'wings', 'wheels', 'carriage', etc., Clark makes the strong assumption that the phenomenon is "a kind of heavier than air construction built for limited flights through the immediate atmosphere. It was most decidedly **not** any sort of spacecraft." This statement is somewhat ambiguous. If it is meant that in the appearance of the objects to the observers, they could only be interpreted as airships, the point is certainly well taken; if it is meant, however, that the intrinsic features of the craft made them drastically different from the class of UFO phenomena observed today, then we disagree with the statement. In addition to the similarities noted in our introduction, there are, in our view, three characteristics of the airships that duplicate the performances observed today: (i) The very general description of the objects as 'cigar-shaped', (ii) the dramatic way of arrival ('descending straight to the earth with great rapidity' in case No. 23) and departure ('like a shot out of a gun' in case

No. 27) and (iii) the reported noise 'whnning' or 'whirling' in case No. 27, witness 'awakened by a whirring noise similar to that made by machinery' in case No. 28).

Not only were these performances beyond the technology of 1897, but it would still be impossible to duplicate them: the airships have the characteristics of a ten-passenger vertical take-off and landing aircraft creating little noise and no ground disturbance, and not propelled by rockets, capable of both extremely high horizontal speeds and remarkable hovering or stationary flight! They violate the laws of inertia and aerodynamics precisely in the same manner as our 'modern' UFOs (see note 11). Yet their outside appearance seems well-designed to convey the impression that they are nothing but advanced dirigibles, just within the grasp of an American farmer of 1897. As for the conversations with the crews, they are also disturbing to the highest point, if they are reliably reported. It should be remembered, however, that not all occupants were described as humans. Hamilton himself, in Leroy, spoke of 'six of the strangest beings I ever saw'. They were jabbering together, but we could not understand a word they said. Later he refers again to 'the cursed thing with its big lights and hideous people.' On the contrary, in most of the Texas encounters, there was communication of the most uncomplicated and mundane nature between the witness and the operators—this duality is indeed present in modern time: it constitutes one of the major mysteries of the French wave of 1954 (cf. also Carrouges book *Les Apparitions de Martiens* and the South American cases).

A great deal of research and discussion will undoubtedly be necessary before this duality can be understood. To appraise objectively the 1897 sightings, one must replace them within the entire history of the rumours of aerial visions—and, perhaps, the strange astronomical observations—that flourished during the second half of the last century and may have culminated in the Siberian catastrophe of 1908 and the New Zealand wave of the following year. What is remarkable in the American wave itself is the revelation of a much higher proportion of landings than was originally suspected, and the discovery of a pattern of contact so remarkable that it may open an entirely new avenue of approach to the UFO mystery.

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A → "SEXUFOR"



IGNACIO DARNAUDE  
Manuel Sturot, 3, Bloque 3.  
SEVILLA - SPAIN

*Lucius Farish is recognized by leaders in flying saucer research as one of the best of the historical ufologists. His reputation is worldwide as he has provided valuable clues to the UFO enigma. Mr. Farish lives in Arkansas*

BRAD STEIGER AND JOAN WHITENDOUR: "THE ALLENDE LETTERS"  
(UNIVERSAL PUBLISHING, NEW YORK, 1968)

# The Great 1897 Air Flap

By Lucius Farish

Item: An electrician from San Jose, California claimed to have taken a 4,400-mile round trip from San Francisco to Honolulu in a mysterious aircraft.

Item: Michigan residents reported the landing of a strange craft which opened to disclose a being 9-1/2 feet tall.

Item: A prominent judge in Texarkana, Arkansas told of going aboard a landed ship and being shown around by its "Oriental-looking" occupants.

The above-listed news stories might well have come from today's papers, considering the scale of UFO activity during the past few years. In actuality, they were taken from newspaper files for the period between November, 1896 and May, 1897. They are contact reports from that mysterious yet revealing period—the time of the "Great Airship Flap."

To citizens of the late 1890's, the term "flying saucer" undoubtedly would have conjured up visions of an irate wife pelting her husband with kitchen crockery! That much-maligned term was not to come into use until over fifty

years later. Neither would the identification term UFO have been meaningful to them. But, if one mentioned the word "airship", there could be little doubt that a swift reaction, pro or con, would be forthcoming.

So far as is known, the sightings began in California in November, 1896. Persons in Sacramento, Oroville, San Francisco, Red Bluff and other communities, reported seeing the "mystic flying light", as the San Francisco *Call* termed it. To fully recount all the 1896-97 sightings would take a very large book. Therefore, this article will be devoted entirely to some of the more outstanding contact reports from this period.

From the beginning, the terrestrial airship concept was uppermost in the public mind. This idea was constantly reinforced by press references to alleged inventors of the airship. As seen from our present-day perspective, the terrestrial airship theory (that the airship was the product of an inventor who had solved the problem of aerial navigation) falls flat. From a purely mechanical and aerodynamic point

of view, it was highly unlikely that any inventor of the period could have constructed a workable craft which could have performed like these airships were purported to do.

Consider the words of British aviation authority and historian, Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, as quoted in the outstanding British UFO magazine, *Flying Saucer Review*:

"Speaking as an aeronautical historian who specializes in the periods before 1910, I can say with certainty that the only air-borne vehicles carrying passengers, which could possibly have been seen anywhere in North America in 1897 were free-flying spherical balloons, and it is highly unlikely for these to be mistaken for anything else. No form of dirigible or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying—or *could* fly then.

That the terrestrial airship theory was almost universally accepted is evident in the first contact account we will examine. The December 2, 1896 edition of the Los Angeles *Times* reported the story under the heading, "A FLIGHT OF IMAGINATION—ANOTHER MAN WHO HAS SEEN THE AIRSHIP:"



*A Milwaukee teen-ager saw this saucer in April of 1967. According to the witness, the object swooped down from his right, then leveled off in flight while emanating a golden glow. After several seconds the UFO soared away*

electricity. It is a wonderful machine and can be stopped and made to stand still in the air anywhere and comes down light as a feather.' "

"Horen lives at the New Exchange Hotel and went to San Francisco Thursday. Some seem to give credence to his story. All admire his abilities as an accomplished story-teller and say he has a marvelous imagination. He sticks to his story and bears the name of a hard-working man."

In our investigations thus far, only two instances have been found wherein the airship crews were of abnormal appearance. The following is one of those cases and is easily the most intriguing of the lot.

The Lansing, Michigan *State Republican*, carried the following story in 1897. Dated Williams-

"SAN JOSE, Dec. 1.—The champion airship story of the season is told by John A. Horen, an electrician in the employ of Electrical Improvement Company of this place. Horen says he has a patent on an electrical platinum speaking appliance and that by appointment he went to San Francisco Thursday to see the inventory of the airship who wished to see the appliance. Said Horen: 'We went on horseback to a point on Sandy Beach, where the airship was, got aboard and rose very high. The height was registered by a meter on the ship. The inventor does not count the distance traveled by miles but by degrees. After leaving Sandy Beach Thursday afternoon we traveled westward. Before day next morning we saw lights. The inventor said they were the lamps of Honolulu. We turned east and Saturday evening about dark landed near where we started. The airship rose by means of two propellers. The movement was noiseless and swift. The inventor is 45 years old, but I cannot now tell any news, but the motive power is not steam or



*A high-pitched whine drew a Kentwood, Louisiana resident's attention to this classically-shaped UFO. As he aimed his camera to the sky, the saucer turned slowly and remained overhead as if watching the curious earthling*

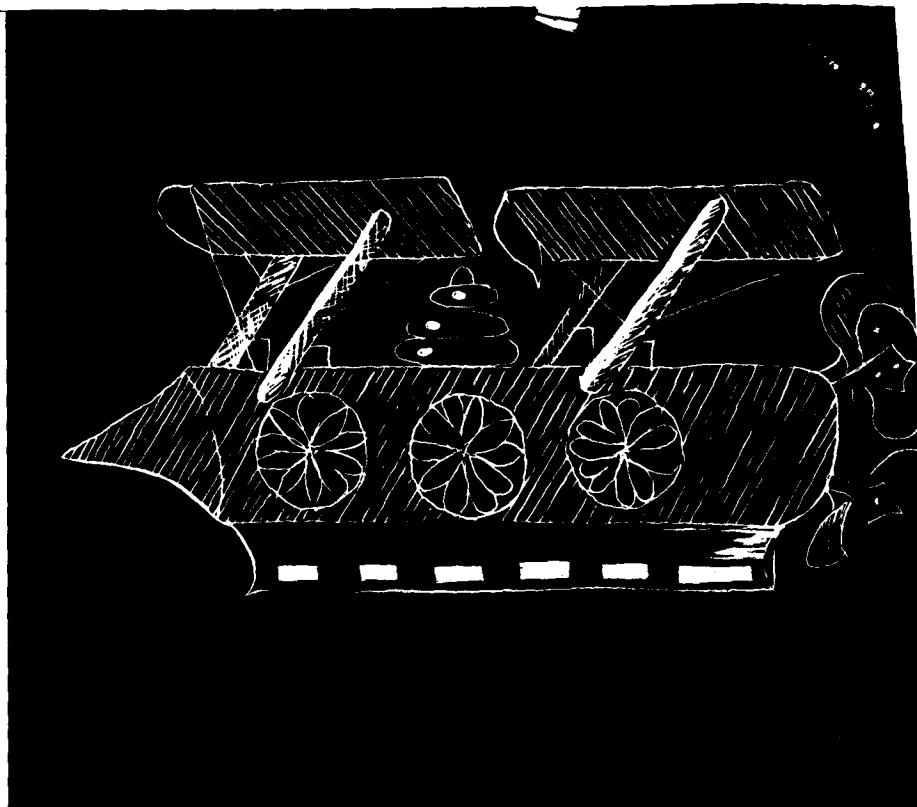
ton, Michigan, April 17, the account says:

"This morning at a point a mile and a half south and west of this village, a balloon or flying machine alighted. The airship was seen about an hour before it alighted, by a dozen farmers or more, who had been watching it. On its attempt to alight, they gathered around, but a good many of them did not remain long after the landing of the ship. A strange man, if man he might be called, was in charge of the ship. While he seemed to have plenty of clothes, he seemed to have no use for them, as he was almost naked, and seemed to be suffering from the heat. He is almost 9-1/2 feet tall and his talk, while musical, is not talk at all, but seems to be a repetition of bellowing. One of the farmers, who was somewhat braver, attempted to go near him and got a kick that will last him for some time, having got his hip broken.

Great excitement prevails here, and lots of people are flocking here from Okemos and Locke to view the strange being at a distance, as no one dares to go near. He seems to be trying to talk to the people. The people here are credulous and those who have not seen refuse to believe, although six of the best people are here and affirm that it is the truth. From their excited manners, we are led to believe that no hoax exists. At 8:10 last evening the airship passed south and a little west of the village. Hundreds of people watched its flight."

No exact date is given for the next story, but it was reported in the April 22nd issue of the *Arkansas Gazette* of Little Rock. The contact had presumably taken place only a short time before. The principal of the story was a Captain Jim Hooton, "The well-known Iron Mountain railroad conductor." Though skeptical of earlier airship reports, the *Gazette* sent one of its reporters to interview Captain Hooton and termed his account "The most authentic story printed."

Said the Captain: "Of course I



*Captain Hooton's own sketch of the rocket-shaped airship he saw in April of 1897*

saw the airship. There is no doubt in the world about it and you will be safe in banking on what I tell you. It came about in this way:

"I had gone down to Texarkana to bring back a special, and knowing that I would have some eight to ten hours to spare at Texarkana, I went to Homan (Arkansas) to do a little hunting. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when I reached that place. The sport was good, and before I knew it, it was after 6 o'clock when I started to make my way back toward the railroad station.

"As I was tramping through the brush my attention was attracted by a familiar sound, a sound for all the world like the working of an air pump on a locomotive. I went at once in the direction of the sound, and there in an open space of some five or six acres, I saw the object making the noise. To say that I was astonished would but feebly express my feelings. I decided at once that this was the famous airship seen by so many people about the country.

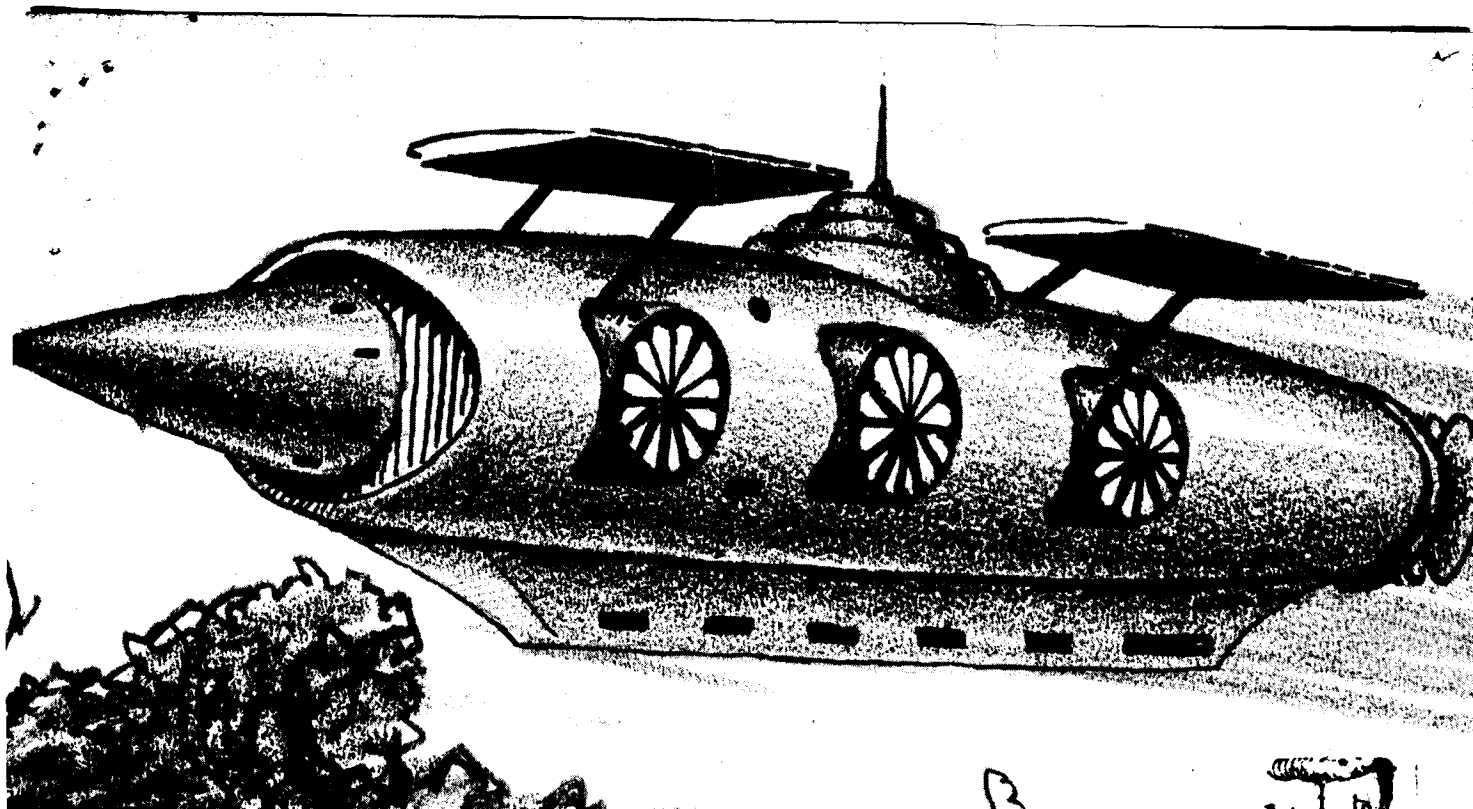
"There was a medium-sized man aboard and I noticed that he was wearing smoked glasses. He was tinkering around what seemed

to be the back-end of the ship, and as I approached I was too dumbfounded to speak. He looked at me in surprise, and said: 'Good day, sir; good day.' I asked: 'Is this the air ship?' and he replied: 'Yes sir,' whereupon three or four other men came out of what was apparently the keel of the ship.

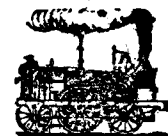
"A close examination showed that the keel was divided into two parts terminating in front like the sharp edge of a knife; in fact, the entire front end of the ship terminated in a knife-like edge, while the sides of the ship bulged gradually toward the middle, and then receded. There were three large wheels upon each side made of some bending metal and arranged so that they became concave as they moved forward.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' I said, 'the noise sounds a good deal like a Westinghouse air brake.' "Perhaps it does, my friend; we are using condensed air and aeroplanes, but you will know more later on." "'All ready, sir,' someone called out, when the party all disappeared below. I observed that just in front of each wheel a two-inch tube began to spurt air on the wheels and they commenced revolving. The ship gradually arose





Artist Hal Crawford's interpretation of Captain Hooton's airship taken from his description in a local paper



with a hissing sound. The aeroplanes suddenly sprang forward, turning their sharp ends skyward, then the rudders at the end of the ship began to veer to one side, and the wheels revolved so fast that one could scarcely see the blades. In less time than it takes to tell you, the ship had gone out of sight.

"This drawing I have made you is the best I can do under the circumstances. I consider I was fortunate in seeing the ship. You may add that she pumped while standing still like the air pump of an engine. One particular feature I remember is that what I would call the cowcatcher was sharp as the blade of a knife and almost as pointed as a needle. There was no bell or bell rope about the ship that I could discover, like I should think every well-regulated air locomotive should have."

Judge Lawrence A. Byrne of Texarkana, Arkansas, told a *Daily Texarkanian* reporter of his encounter with an airship and its occupants on April 23rd of that year. The reporter, while acknowledging that the Judge was "known here for his truthfulness," nevertheless found his story a bit beyond belief. Admitting that the

account was "a well studied one" and "ingeniously wrought," the reporter quoted the Judge as follows:

"I was down on McKinney bayou Friday looking after the surveying of a tract of land, and in passing through a thicket to an open space, saw a strange looking object anchored to the ground. On approaching I found it to be the 'airship' I have read so much about of late. It was manned by three men who spoke a foreign language, but judging from their looks, one would take them to be Japs. They saw my astonishment and beckoned me to follow them, and on complying, was shown through the ship."

Following this, the Judge explained "about the machinery being made of aluminum and the gas to raise and lower the monster was pumped into an aluminum tank when the ship was to be raised and let out when to be lowered." This is the only other account in our files which describes beings of other than normal appearance. Even here, the difference is not nearly so pronounced as in the Williamston, Michigan story of a 9-1/2-foot-tall being.

In considering the contact stories we have described, it should be borne in mind that research into the 1896-97 flap has only just begun. Thus far, only four states—Texas, Kansas, Michigan and Arkansas—have been even semi-researched. Credit should be given to those researchers who have contributed to our meager knowledge of this period. In Kansas, Harry Fleenor of Topeka has given much time to this study and is largely responsible for this writer's all-consuming interest. Jerome Clark of Canby, Minnesota, has written a number of airship articles for both popular and specialized publications and in so doing, has brought the subject to the public's attention. Jacques Vallee and Donald Hanlon have also publicized the airship flap in their articles for *Flying Saucer Review*.

Researcher Gary Larreategui of Lansing, Michigan has delved into old newspaper files and given us some very important data, such as the Williamston "giant" report. It is our fervent hope that other interested persons will dig into their local newspaper files and provide other equally important information concerning the period in question.



# THE E.T. CONCEPT IN HISTORY

Lucius Farish

THIS contribution is occasioned by one of Gordon Creighton's remarks in a recent issue of *Flying Saucer Review*.<sup>1</sup> In discussing the history of those whom he terms the "Gentry," Creighton wondered if anyone prior to the early 1950s had claimed contact with "extraterrestrials."

Further, Mr. Creighton remarked, "What does seem certain, at any rate, is that, during the American Visitation of 1897 for example, not one of the entities allegedly met told any American that he was from another planet, and not a single American is reported in the press of that time as having thought there was anything 'interplanetary' about the whole affair."

Let us take these subjects one by one and see how well they stand the test of examination:

(1) Did anyone claim to have met inhabitants of other planets prior to 1952 or thereabouts? Yes, most definitely!

In the revised paperback edition of Vallée's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*,<sup>2</sup> reference is made to the Jesuit scholar, Athanasius Kircher, who "could not find his words" to convey to his readers the admiration he felt for the inhabitants of Venus. He describes them as young men of a wonderful beauty, whose clothes were as transparent as crystal . . ."

Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680) wrote on a wide variety of scientific subjects, but most of his writings have never been translated from the original Latin. However, in Gustav Davidson's *A Dictionary of Angels*,<sup>3</sup> a bit more information is given concerning Kircher's "visits to various planets."

According to Davidson, Kircher was accompanied on his celestial flights by "the genius Cosmiel." On

Saturn, he found the "sinister" genii inhabiting that planet. The "guardian angels of all the virtues" were found living on the "Elysian shores of the planet Jupiter."

If some Latin scholar among the FSR readers should wish to translate more of Kircher's writings into English—a worthy project, it would seem—the interplanetary accounts will probably be found in two works—*Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Rome, 1652) and *Voyage Ecstatique* (Rome, 1656).

Vallée also mentions one David Fabricius, a 17th Century writer who claimed to have met the "inhabitants of the Moon." Investigation of Fabricius' writings might well disclose more pertinent details.

Some time in the late 1800s, a book entitled *The Man From Mars* was published. The author, Thomas Blot, claimed to have met an inhabitant of the Red Planet in the mountains of California. The Martian had not arrived by spaceship, but through a process which seems to have been a mixture of astral projection and teleportation (if such a thing can be conceived!). Long discourses by the Martian, largely of a philosophical/sociological nature, are contained in the book. The only copy this writer has seen had the copyright date missing, so it is not possible to say precisely when the incident allegedly occurred. However, it was at the time of an extremely close approach of the planet Mars.

One modern contactee, Albert Coe of Beverly, New Jersey, claims to have been in contact with people now living on Mars and Venus who are descendants of a race which once lived on "Norca," a planet of the star Tau Ceti. Coe says his original contact occurred in 1920 and they have continued over the past 52 years.<sup>4</sup>

## REJUVENATION FOLLOWS CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH UFO—Continued from page 13

as soon as we got there she suddenly awoke and fled in terror, scratching my arms as she escaped from me.

### The Dead Catfish

The Bromatology analysis has not yet been received. The water of the small stream where the dead fish were found is normally drinkable. Two or three metres wide and about 50 or 60 cms. deep, its water is always crystal-clear and its flow is regular, indeed at times very fast. No more dead fish have been found since the first batch.

I must repeat that on the occasion of my second visit to the witness, and also all the other persons engaged in investigating this case, again emphasised their wish to remain anonymous and, despite our pleadings, they also insisted that even the name of the town be withheld. They consider that this is the only way in which they

can be sure of avoiding a mass invasion by reporters and curiosity-seeking intruders.

Buenos Aires, February 27, 1973.

\* \* \* \* \*

### NOTE BY EDITOR OF FSR

The name of the town, the name of the witness, and the name of the Secretary to the local Government Office who participated in the interrogation of Sr. V.M., are on record with us, and in accordance with Señor Romaniuk's express request we shall not reveal them until advised that we may do so.

[As indicated in our note on p. 10, some of these details have been published in Germany, so the restriction is now lifted.—C.B.]

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These are only a few examples of "pre-flying saucer" contactees.

(2) Did any of the "airship contactees" of 1896-97 claim to have met extraterrestrials? No—not exactly. Some of the people who met airship crews seem to have wondered if the "aeronauts" were terrestrials or otherwise, but no one openly voiced an opinion on the matter. There are only "hints," such as that of the Texas contactee who said he would not have been more astonished had he entertained inhabitants of the Moon. Or the Missouri man who met a nude man and woman from an airship and wondered if "Adam and Eve had come to Earth again." Or even Alexander Hamilton, the Kansas rancher who unwillingly provided a steak dinner for a group of airship occupants and wondered if they were "devils or angels."

(3) Did the newspapers of the airship era quote anyone as believing the strange aircraft were of E.T. origin? Again, the answer is a definite Yes.

The first reference to a possible E.T. source for the airships came in November 1896, during the wave of sightings on the U.S. West Coast.

In the November 24, 1896, edition of the Sacramento, California, *Bee*, the following letter appeared, headed "A Visitor From Mars?":

"To the Editor of the *Bee*—Sir: There is nothing improbable about our recent airship visitor. The only doubt that can arise is as to the origin of this particular aerial messenger.

"In my investigation of this subject, it would seem that this visitor is from our neighbouring planet Mars. We know, from the evidence of scientists and astronomers that Mars is many millions of years older than this earth. It is but reasonable to agree and conclude that the inhabitants of our nearest planetary neighbor, are more advanced in the sciences, and have more knowledge of the use of the great electric power than the denizens of the earth. Many thousands of years' experience have given them the perfection of inventions which would appear marvelous to our mundane people.

"The Lord Commissioner of Mars has evidently sent one of his electric aircraft on an exploring expedition to the younger but larger worlds.

"The airships are constructed of the lightest and strongest fabrics and the machinery is of the most perfect electrical work.

"Aluminium and glass, hardened by the same chemical process that forms our diamonds, contribute the chief material of their most perfect airships.

"When in use, these vessels, at a distance, have the appearance of a ball of fire, being operated wholly by the electric current generated on such vessel.

"The speed of our Martian ships is very great, and can be regulated to the rapidity of a thousand miles a second.

"In fact, with the Martian inventions, space is almost annihilated. These aerial craft can so adopt their courses that when they desire to rest they can anchor within certain degrees of latitude and wait

for the revolutions of the earth, for instance, bring any particular locality desired, much nearer them, without the necessity of any aerial navigation.

"In Mars, all the great electric power is converted by the waves of the ocean, thus making electricity a common utility for everything necessary for their arts, sciences, manufactures, commerce, and transportation.

"It is supposed that the Lord Commissioner of Mars, in sending out his airship is seeking to establish telegraphic or telephone communication between the planets.

"It is probable, that in a short time this embassy will make a call upon the President. Perhaps they are delaying until Major McKinley assumes the administration of affairs, on the theory that there may be more advanced ideas in this event.—W.A., Sacramento, November 24, 1896."

Consider the now-familiar elements in W.A.'s story: The "hardened" aluminium and glass used in airship construction were paralleled by Adamski's comments about metals which were processed to the point of translucence. Where W.A. described the airships as having the appearance of a "ball of fire" when seen at a distance, modern contactees and theorists speak of "heavy forcefields." The speed of the "Martian" airships—"a thousand miles a second"—and their ability to "orbit" over a precise area are details which seem not to belong to the world of 1896. Unless, of course, W.A. had obtained his information "at first hand"—as seems likely.

Who else thought of Martians in 1896-97? Several people, apparently. Following the rustling of Alexander Hamilton's heifer by "hideous people" in an airship, the Colony, Kansas, *Free Press* commented: "The *Free Press* having turned the 'NOCTURNAL AERIAL VISITOR' completely over in its mind, is now of the opinion that the airship is not of *this world*, but is probably operated by a party of scientists from the planet Mars, who are out, either on a lark, or a tour of inspection of the solar system in the cause of science."

The Van Buren, Arkansas, *Daily Argus* of May 12, 1897, featured the opinions of a local resident concerning the aerial visitations: "Everybody has a theory concerning the airship story. The most acceptable theory is that it is of mundane origin, and that the secret concerning it will soon be known. Capt. Bostick stands alone in his theory, he asserting that it is an invention of some inhabitant of Mars who is down on a prospecting tour and is studying our system of government."

The St. Louis, Missouri, *Post-Dispatch*, in an editorial entitled "What Light Do We See?," speculated that the airships might be "visitors from Mars, fearful, at the last, of invading the planet they have been seeking. It is certainly time for Camille Flammarion to spread out an illuminated problem in Euclid which the Martians could recognise as a message of peace and good will as well as a hospitable invitation to alight."

In Michigan, the Benton Harbor *Daily Palladium* of April 13, 1897, commented on the airship reports:

(Continued on page 26)



Feature Article

## THE GREAT AIRSHIP SCARE

By DENNIS STAMEY (Illustrated by Charles Roller, Jr.)

In the quiet evening of November 18, 1896, hundreds of residents in Sacramento, Calif., gazed skyward at a metallic, cylindrical craft drifting through the heavens. The object cast down brilliant beams of light upon the city, and then slowly headed out on its predestined course to San Francisco.

The following evening, the bay communities of Oakland and San Francisco were plunged into panic when another flying vessel made a low level descent above the streets. Horses bolted, buggies overturned and pedestrians ran in terror. The strange airship maintained a straight-line flight out toward the coastline, and then disappeared.

"My entire family saw the machine when it came across the bay from Oakland," commented then Mayor Suro of San Francisco.

Frightened, bewildered, the newspapers and the people of Northern California were desperately trying to make some sense out of the mystery. Descriptions generally agreed that the flying monster was about 150 feet in length, equipped with powerful searchlights and four rotor-like arms. It seemed to be, at best, rather cumbersome and exhibited no spectacular outburst of speed. Yet the craft could easily outperform anything man could put up into the air, at that date.

A streetcar driver, Shelby Yost, and his eleven passengers told newsmen at Oakland that an illuminated object had passed over the downtown section on the evening of November 22. It sped silently across the horizon and then cast an intense, blinding glow over the entire community.

"I didn't want to admit I'd gone crazy," said Yost, "but for a minute, I thought my senses had deserted me."

The December 2, 1896, edition of the *Los Angeles Times* broke the strange story of electrician John A. Horen from San Jose, Calif., probably the first man ever to step inside one of these marvelous airships. It made headlines across the nation, and here

is some brief text from his account:

"We left California in the morning and headed westward. The ship travelled by means of two propellers...movement was noiseless and swift. The motive power was not steam or electricity. It was a wonderful machine and can be stopped and made to stand still anywhere in the air..."

Horen said the pilot was 45 years of age and completely human. The airship reportedly took him on a quick excursion to Honolulu which he described as brilliantly lighted with lamps.

The article in the *Times* concluded, "He sticks to his story and bears the name of a hard-working man."

About the same time, William Bull Meek of Comptonville, Calif., and his four companions encountered a normal looking fellow whose airship had just landed in a desolate valley. Meek, who was interviewed by reporters from *The Sacramento Bee*, said that the "man stepped from the ship and said he had come from the Montezuma Mountains...wherever they are."

By December the airships left the scene as mysteriously as they arrived. The sightings had been concentrated in a small area; but by March the following year, the aerial performers returned to becloud the skies throughout the country. It seemed as if a well-planned invasion was beginning.

Watchers in Omaha on the night of March 29 reported some sort of controlled aerial vehicle roaming the evening sky. The object, conceivably the same one, was again seen the next night over Denver, where witnesses described it as brightly illuminated, cruising at high altitude and moving northwest.

On April 1, *The New York Sun* gave sporadic running accounts of a strange craft reported around Kansas City, Mo., which paused from time to time to send down beams of light. Various communities in Texas also reported sightings, including Dallas,

Fort Worth, Marshall and Beaumont.

*The New York Herald* of April 11 reported that on the nights of April 9 and 10, Chicago was flooded with stories of eerie lights that were seen from 8 p.m. until 2 o'clock in the morning. "Thousands of persons declared the lights seen in the northwest were those of an airship..." said the *Herald*. Some declared that they could distinguish two cigar-shaped objects and great wings.

Adolph Winkle and John Hylle swore a craft landed in a field two miles north of Springfield, Ill., on April 15. Aboard the machine were two men and a woman. The farmhands excitedly blurted out their story: "They said the ship came from Quincy, flying 90 miles in thirty minutes. They plan on making a report to the government when Cuba is declared free."

Several people in Benton, Texas, watched a cigar-shaped vessel on the night of April 16 as it crossed between them and the moon.

A story from the *Daily Post* at Childress, Texas, reported the observation of a fast-moving aerial body about two thousand feet high and on a westerly course, on April 17.

That same date yielded a number of tantalizing incidents including the alleged crash of a spaceship near the tiny village of Aurora, Texas. A correspondent for the *Dallas Morning News*, S.E. Haydon, visited the crash-site and reported that the remains of the ship and its eerie looking pilot were being collected. The spaceman was also going to be buried, he said, with full ceremony in tribute to a brave voyager.

But just as bizarre is the chilling incident telegraphed from Williamston, Mich., and picked up in an edition of *The Lansing State Republican*:

"Williamston, Mich., April 17—This morning at a mile south and a half mile west of this village, a balloon or flying machine landed in a field. A dozen farmers watched the airship for

## LA INVASION DE OVNIS NO COMENZO EN 1947

# EL MISTERIO DE LAS NAVES VOLADORAS

Por JOHN A. KEEL

La fase moderna del fenómeno OVNI se inicia en 1840, al surgir sobre los cielos de Europa y América una oleada de misteriosas naves, dirigibles y aeroplanos. ¿Cuál es el significado de estos avistamientos del pasado? ¿Por qué los OVNIS no fueron vistos como platillos sino como antiguos vehículos?

*Es esta la primera colaboración exclusiva que nos envía el prestigiado escritor norteamericano John A. Keel, quien ha elaborado una de las teorías más singulares y coherentes sobre el fenómeno OVNI. De esta forma, CONTACTOS EXTRATERRESTRES cumple con el compromiso adquirido con sus lectores de superarse continuamente. Con colaboradores como Keel la revista tiene una garantía de seriedad e información de primera línea que los lectores seguramente sabrán valorar.*

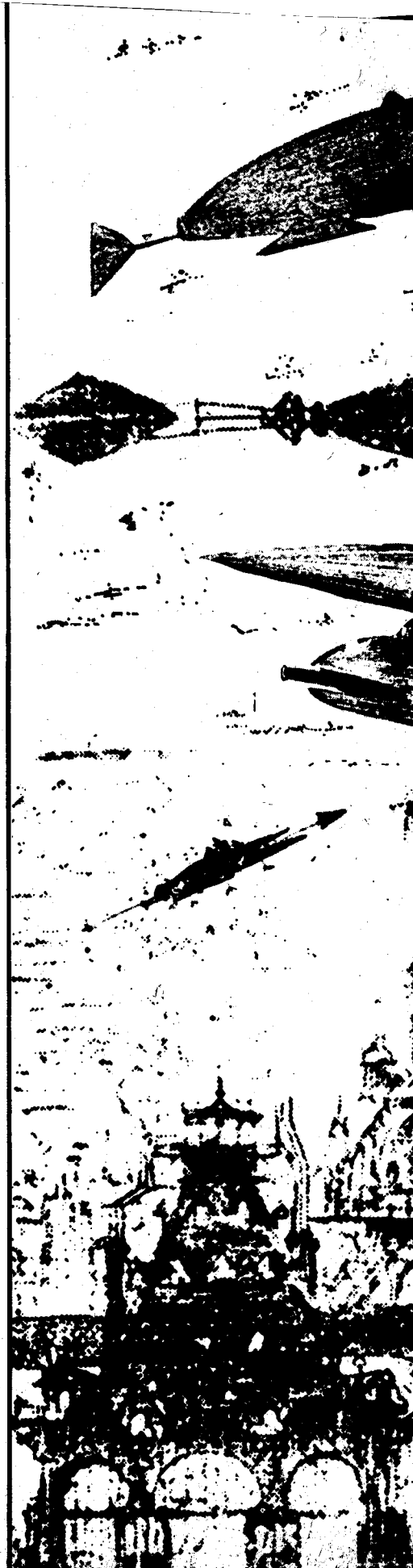
Llegaron cautelosamente en 1840. No fueron observados por nadie excepto por los marineros de algunos barcos, quienes reportaron en las anotaciones de los diarios navales, relámpagos repentinos que surcaron el cielo nocturno y los océanos. Pero a partir de su arribo, comenzaron a suceder cosas extrañas. Las embarcaciones desaparecieron para siempre. Unos veleros fueron encontrados a la deriva, en el Atlántico, completamente intactos, aunque su tripulación había desaparecido misteriosamente.

Los objetos se concentraron en las más recónditas y escasamente pobladas regiones de nuestro planeta, más allá de los círculos del Ártico y del Antártico. Los marineros les vieron sumergirse en el mar o, en muchos casos, emerger

de él y lanzarse precipitadamente a los cielos.

Entonces, a principios de 1877, los astrónomos se dieron cuenta de su existencia. Vieron pasar, viajando en línea recta/formaciones sobre las superficies del Sol y de la Luna. Desafiando a las leyes tradicionales de movimiento, aparecieron cometas y meteoros. Los astrónomos se quedaron estupefactos, no daban crédito a lo que veían en sus telescopios.

El finado astrofísico Morris K. Jessup llamó a los años 1877-1888, "La increíble década", por todas las cosas que se avistaron en el espacio, como también por los extraños sucesos que acaecieron aquí en la Tierra. En 1879, cayeron sobre Inglaterra inmensos pedazos de hielo, y al mismo tiempo, llovió sobre Chicago algo como



fragmentos de un horno de fundición. En las Indias del Oeste llovieron toneladas de lodo. En Argentina llovió carbón. Una tortuga de 60 pies de largo y 40 de ancho fue encontrada en Nueva Zelanda. En 1880, una gran nube de moscas negras, ennegreciendo los cielos en Francia y Nueva Escocia, tardó veinte minutos en pasar. Gigantescas ruedas de luz, vistas por el barco "Buitre", giraban bajo las aguas de los mares de Asia. En Francia, el techo de pizarra de una casa saltó súbitamente y cayó a gran distancia, a pesar de que no había el más leve indicio de viento. En Ontario, Canadá, un grupo de hombres dijo haber visto cómo las piedras del campo se elevaban hacia los cielos.

Durante esta década, muchos astrónomos famosos se vieron envueltos en terribles controversias sobre lo que se había observado en los cielos nocturnos, antiguamente plácidos. Se llevaron a cabo acalorados debates acerca de una escuadrilla de extraños objetos que pasó volando a cientos de millas de la Tierra.

## LOS PLATIVOLOS HABIAN LLEGADO, ELLOS LOS VIERON

De dónde vinieron y cómo llegaron es una pregunta que aún no se puede contestar. No obstante, existen testimonios de hechos inusitados aparecidos en el cielo desde los orígenes del Universo, aunque en realidad la fase moderna comenzó en 1840. Quizá exista algún fenómeno que haya rodeado por siempre a nuestro planeta. Puede ser que ellos, al igual que nosotros, residan aquí, construyendo sus hogares en las desoladas extensiones del norte o en la vastedad inexplorada del fondo de los océanos. Puede ser que hayan venido de otro mundo, de un planeta distante, o bien de otra dimensión del espacio.

En todo caso, en 1880, comenzaron a edificar sus fuerzas en este globo y sus movimientos causaron cambios sobrenaturales en nuestra atmósfera produciendo extrañas tormentas y fenómenos atmosféricos, fijando así la primera etapa de lo que había de suceder.

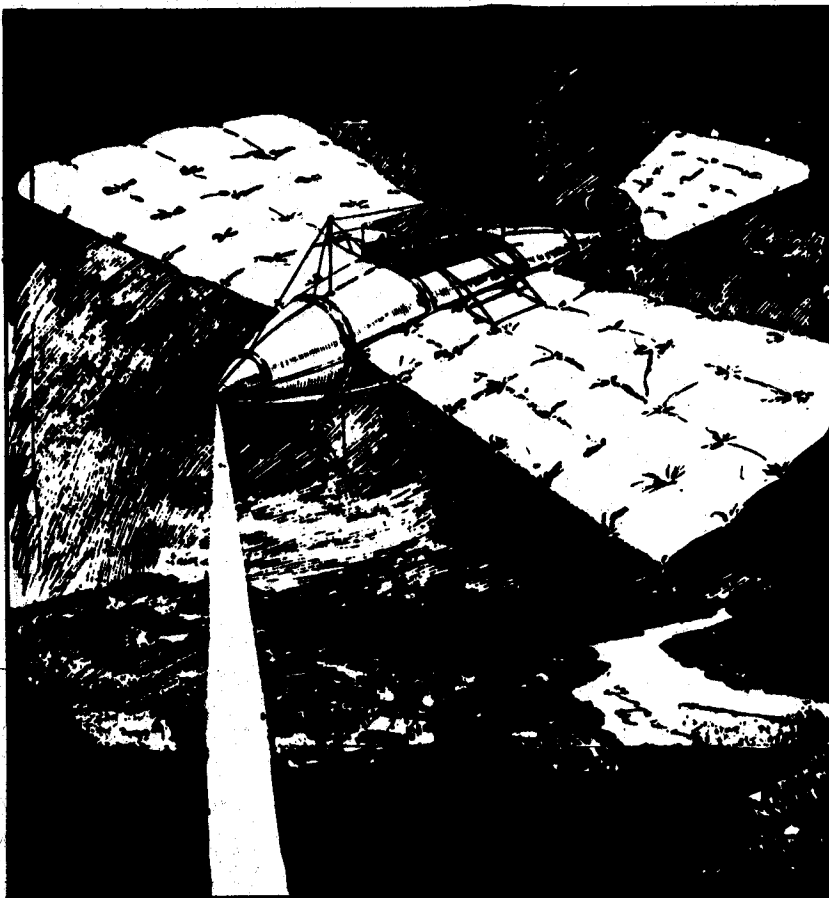
En noviembre de 1896, en California, tuvo lugar la oleada más grande de OVNIS. Durante las siguientes semanas del mismo mes los monstruosos objetos aparecieron de repente sobre San Francisco y otras ciudades de la costa Oeste.

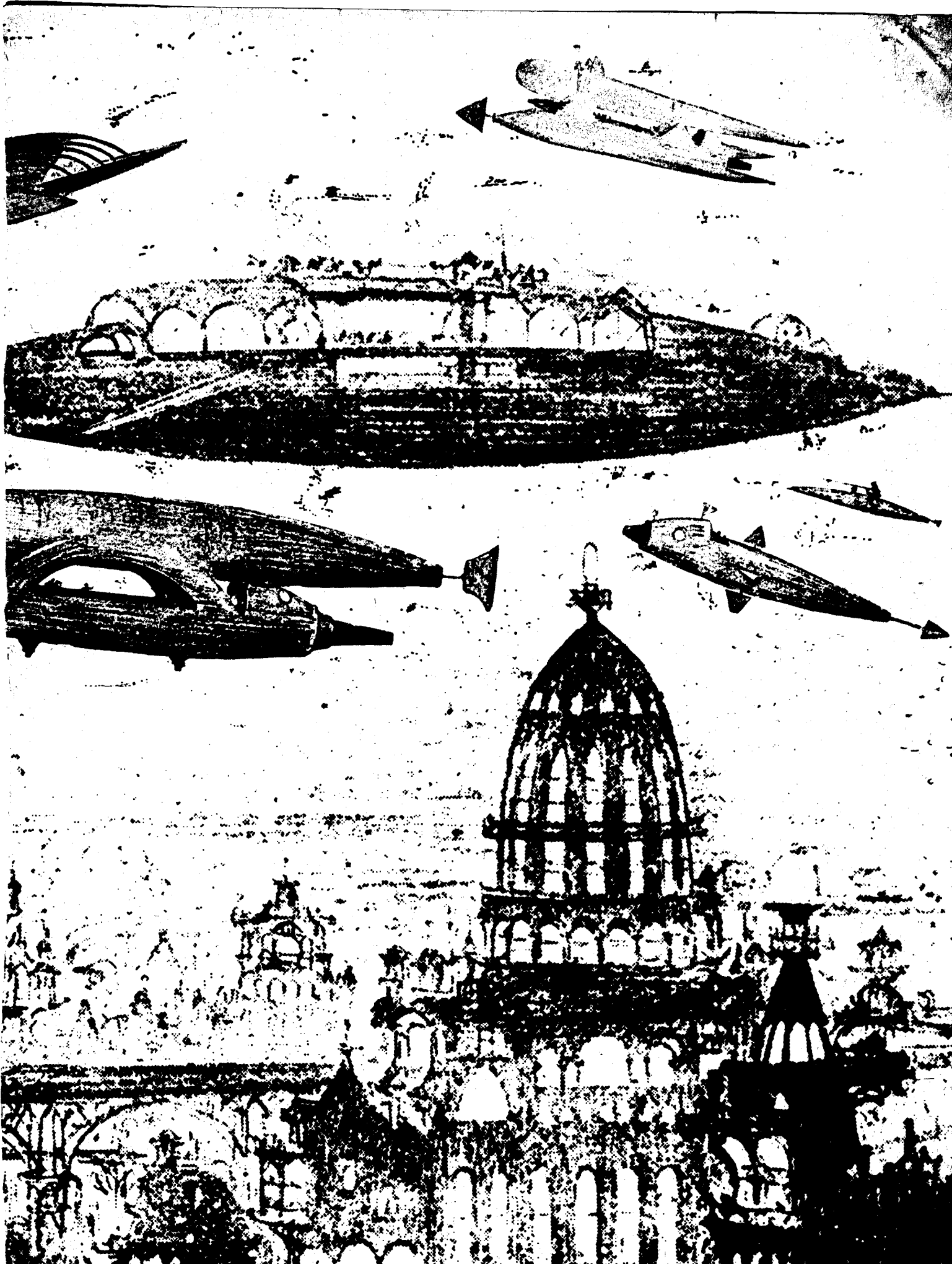
Formadas como cigarras en vuelo, las naves escudriñaban la Tierra con sus brillantes reflectores. Los ciudadanos de California se aterraron. En Europa, algunos inventores como Santos-Dumont trataron de construir dirigibles controlados, pero en Estados Unidos estas máquinas no existían (el primer dirigible americano voló sobre Coney Island, Nueva York, en 1902).

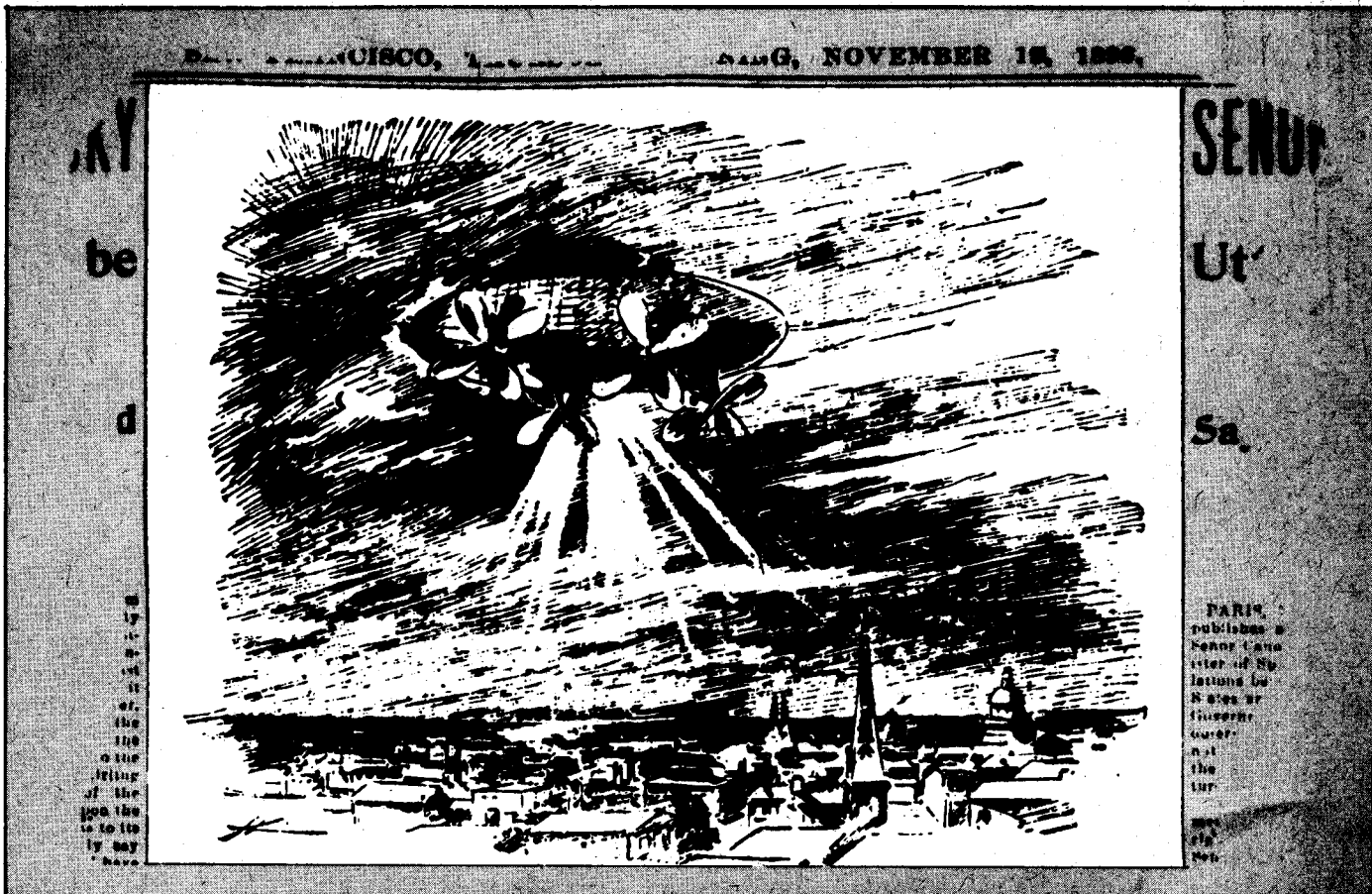
Tres meses después, en marzo de 1897, las misteriosas naves aparecieron volando de nuevo desde la frontera con Canadá hasta la costa del golfo.

Los platillos fueron observados por millares de personas y, esa misma noche, se tuvieron señales de ellos en distintas ciudades de los Estados Unidos. . . lo que indi-

*En 1896, los periódicos de California publicaron cientos de noticias sobre la "Gran Nave" que surcaba los cielos de todo el estado. Los avistamientos, al parecer del mismo objeto, fueron interpretados de diversas maneras. En la ilustración de la izquierda, perteneciente al "Morning Journal", se ve como un aeroplano primitivo. Abajo, en una ilustración del periódico "The San Francisco Call", se interpreta como una especie de dirigible con hélices y una potente luz abajo.*







ca que varias naves volaban al mismo tiempo.

Hubo reportes de docenas de aterrizajes y testigos dignos de confianza aseguraron haber sostenido conversación con los tripulantes de las naves. En todos los casos, con excepción de uno, se describió a los tripulantes con apariencia de seres humanos comunes y corrientes. Vestían, hablaban y se comportaban como nosotros.

Sin embargo, contaron historias contradictorias acerca de su lugar de origen. Algunos dijeron que su nave había sido construida, en secreto, en el estado de Nebraska. Otros nombraron distintos estados. Únicamente un testigo, un juez de Arkansas, aseguró que eran distintos a nosotros. Dijo que los pilotos eran japoneses.

A fines de abril, las naves desaparecieron en la misma forma misteriosa como habían llegado. Más tarde, en 1897, se les reportó en Canadá, Escandinavia y Siberia. (Investigadores americanos como Lucius Farish, Charles Flood, Jerome Clark y el doctor Jacques Vallee, y desde luego yo mismo,

habíamos empleado años buscando en viejos periódicos los miles de reportes que se publicaron acerca de esto.)

### BAJO DISTINTAS FORMAS, APARECEN EN EUROPA Y AUSTRALIA

La siguiente oleada importante de esas misteriosas naves acaeció en el año de 1909. Las apariciones comenzaron a suceder en Gran Bretaña. En el periodo 1896-97 se les describió como dirigibles con faros buscadores de alta potencia. Fueron vistos, primero, por las embarcaciones del Mar del Norte, mientras volaban del sur hacia el círculo ártico. Después pasaron sobre Inglaterra desde Suffolk, Northfolk, Essex, en la costa Este, hacia Gales, en la costa Oeste.

Las apariciones principiaron el mes de mayo. El primer artefacto avistado voló tan bajo que pudo verse claramente, y en esa ocasión se reportó un aterrizaje. Este tuvo lugar en la región montañosa de Gales. El testigo aseguró que los dos pilotos que tripulaban la na-

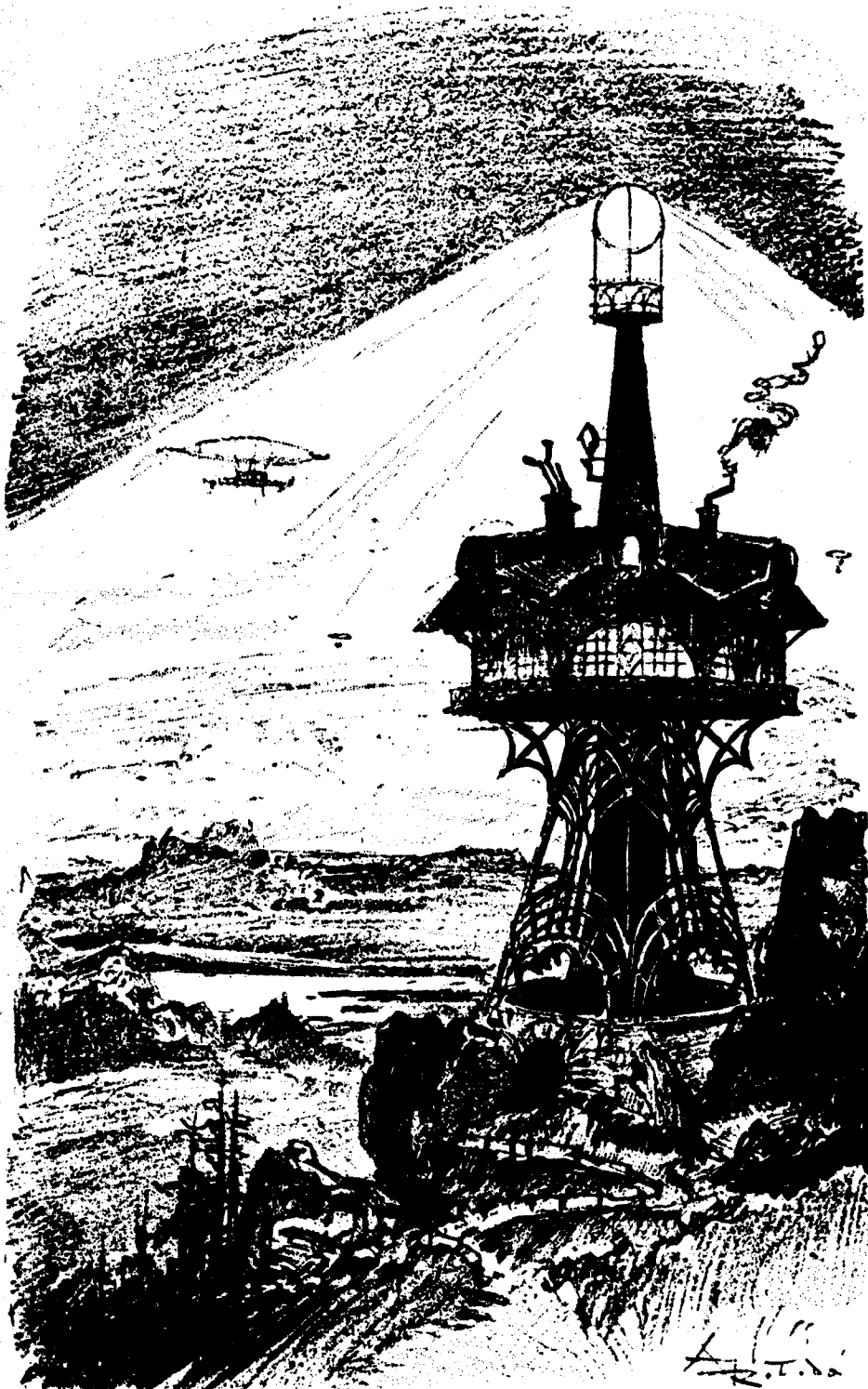
Otra ilustración de "The San Francisco Call" donde se ve al mismo objeto sobrevolando un área de la población de Sacramento.

ve usaban abrigos y capas de piel, vestimenta lógica, si es que venían del norte. Cuando advirtieron que los observaban, se avalanzaron sobre su máquina y emprendieron el vuelo.

A principios de junio, los platillos aparecieron sobre Dublín y Belfast, en Irlanda, dirigiéndose aparentemente hacia el norte. Un mes después, a fines de julio de 1909, los habitantes de la Isla del Sur, en Nueva Zelandia, al sureste de Australia y cerca del círculo del Atlántico, vieron dirigibles que, como usualmente sucedía, reflejaban a su paso la luz de sus poderosos reflectores sobre la tierra. Durante dos semanas realizaron vuelos nocturnos, dirigiéndose gradualmente hacia el norte. Sólo un aterrizaje fue reportado y el testigo dijo que los tripulantes de la nave eran japoneses (Japón no tenía en ese entonces naves en operación).

Los avistamientos continuaron. En Australia, a 100 millas de Nue-





*Los extraños invasores del siglo pasado establecieron sus bases en lugares inaccesibles y desde ahí enviaron a las ciudades artefactos volantes muy parecidos a los que se diseñaban en aquella época.*

va Zelandia, fueron vistos brevemente cuando se dirigían de nuevo al círculo Antártico.

Durante el mes de septiembre, hubo apariciones esporádicas de misteriosos dirigibles en el norte

de Europa, particularmente en Suiza.

En el amanecer del 20 de noviembre de 1909, fueron vistas sobre Boston, Massachussets, luces de gran intensidad. Pronto todos los estados de Nueva Inglaterra, de Connecticut a Maine, observaron a los extraños objetos voladores.

Parecían venir por el sur y desaparecer por el norte. Muchos tes-

tigos pensaron que se trataba de máquinas con alas en forma de cigarro. La prensa especuló que

no eran más que aviones recién inventados, los cuales habían sido contruidos clandestinamente por un inventor local, en Worcester, Massachussets. Pero el inventor jamás dio su creación a la publicidad.

La siguiente escala en la ruta fantasma de la nave fue Africa del Sur, en 1914. Los granjeros del lugar dijeron haber visto dirigibles, los cuales proyectaban en la selva africana las potentes luces de sus reflectores.

#### PATRONES DE LAS OLEADAS

Varios patrones significantes se destacaron en estas tempranas oleadas. Los objetos voladores siguieron un itinerario que se repetiría muchas veces en las oleadas de los años 1950 y 1960. Las oleadas tendían a principiar alrededor del verano y el solsticio de invierno (junio 22 es el día más largo del año y diciembre 22 el más corto).

La mayoría de los avistamientos sucedían al anochecer, alrededor de las 8 y las 10 P.M. Finalmente, y para sorpresa de todos, gran número de los arribos tuvieron lugar los días miércoles.

Los primeros investigadores de OVNIS se dieron cuenta de que los objetos seguían rutas que empezaban en el Artico o Antártico, dato que podría ser un indicio de la existencia de bases ocultas localizadas en heladas e inhabitadas regiones del planeta.

Los extraños invasores se infiltraron en nuestro planeta durante el siglo pasado. Para permanecer alejados de nosotros, establecieron sus bases en lugares inaccesibles y, con el fin de hacerse menos notorios, emplearon artefactos semejantes a los diseñados por nuestros inventores.

En los años treinta aparecieron al norte de Noruega y Suecia gran cantidad de biplanos. Los escandinavos les llamaron "fantasmas voladores" y el ejército no fue capaz de identificarlos o hacerlos descender, a pesar de sus denodados esfuerzos.

*Continúa en la pag. 47*

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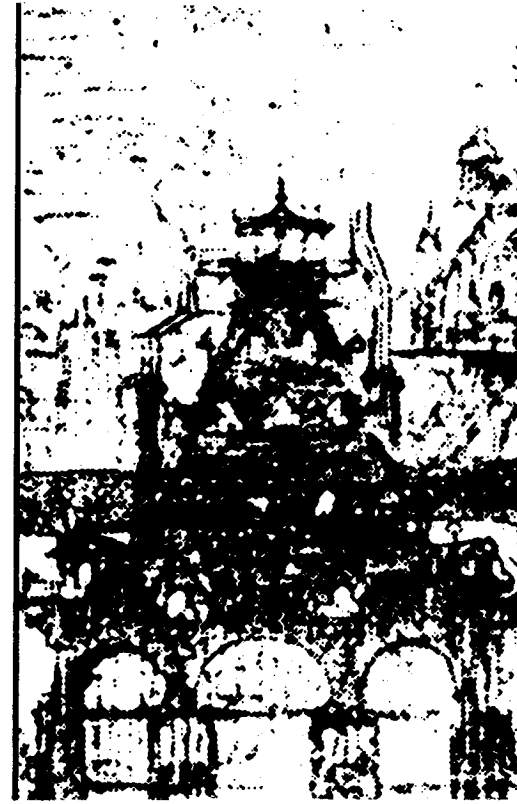
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J.A. KEEL: "EL MISTERIO DE LAS NAVES VOLADORAS"



"CONTACTOS", 1981

# THE 19th CENTURY AIRSHIP MYSTERY

By DON BERLINER

INFO JOURNAL, No 29, MAY-JUNE 1978

It happened eighty years ago, and still people can't agree on what they were. There were scores of sightings, many hundreds of witnesses, and some highly ornate descriptions. There was a minimum of things with which to confuse them, as neither the airplane nor the orbiting satellite had yet been invented. Why, then, should the "Great Airship Mystery of 1896-1897" remain such a mystery?

Leaving aside the deep psychological aspects for others to ponder as they wish, we'll try to stick closely to the mechanics of the matter. The question we intend to face is this: "Could the wondrous craft reported throughout the United States in late 1896 and early 1897 have been man-made airships?" Excluding hoaxes, this should pretty well zero in on the likelihood of their having been genuine UFOs.

First of all, what did people claim to have seen? As almost all the sightings in the November 1896 wave were at night, few of the reports contain much convincing detail about the actual craft involved. By and large, they told of lights--one or two very bright ones, like locomotive headlights, and often many smaller ones. Behind the lights were seen, dimly, round or oblong objects--often egg-shaped or cylindrical--with, upon occasion, some rather odd features such as wings or riverboat-like paddle wheels. But, as anyone who has looked at the lights of a night-flying airplane can attest, discerning the shape of a flying machine from its lights is all but impossible.

During the second wave, in April 1897, the descriptions approximated those of the earlier flurry of activity, since they were also generally at night. Basically, people reported oblong objects with a wide variety of lights and sometimes some quite peculiar gadgets sticking out of the bottom, sides, or top.

Does any of this make sense?

In order to answer that, one first has to take a careful look at the state of the art of dirigible development in the late 19th Century, and also at the subsequent trends in powered, lighter-than-air craft. In addition, attention must also be paid to the existing knowledge of, and later progress in, engines and motors, electrical batteries, and similar equipment implied by the appearance or behavior of the "airships."

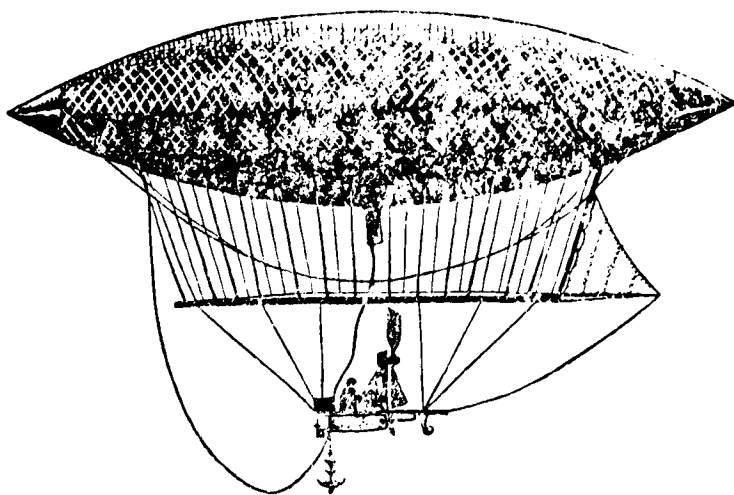
## KNOWN AIRSHIP HISTORY

While considerable work had been going on in Europe leading to the perfection of the dirigible, the United States was far behind in such experimenting, in 1896 and 1897. The first true dirigible (a powered, steerable, lighter-than-air machine) was built and flown by Henri Giffard at Paris in 1852. With a 3 hp steam engine (weighing 350 lbs.), Giffard flew his 144-foot long airship 17 miles at about 5 mph. An improved version was wrecked prior to its first flight.

The first dirigible to be powered by an electric motor was the brainchild of the Tissandier brothers, also in France, and made two slow flights in 1883. A year later, French Army engineers Renard and Krebs flew their 170-foot electric-powered "La France" in winds up to 10 mph.

Little more was done until 1886, when a German, Karl Wolfert, built the first gasoline-fueled, piston-engine dirigible, which a young man flew for two miles on just 2 hp! In 1896, an improved Wolfert dirigible, the "Deutschland," flew briefly. And in 1897, his third craft, using a 6 hp Daimler engine, crashed fatally during its first flight.

Also in 1897, David Schwartz, an Austrian, built a quite sophisticated (at least for those days) all-aluminum

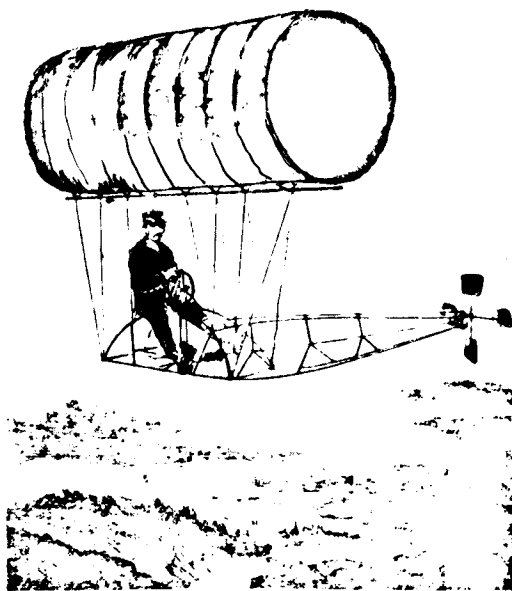


The Giffard Airship, 1852

dirigible. But due to poor piloting, this interesting machine was destroyed seconds after its maiden lift-off.

Not until the brilliant little Brazilian, Alberto Santos-Dumont arrived on the scene in 1898, did the dirigible show any signs of becoming even remotely useful. He flew the first of his many small airships at Paris, in September, and then used it for repeated short pleasure flights. Two more Santos Dumont dirigibles were flown in 1899, with one of them reaching a speed of 15 mph in November of that year.

In 1900, progress was greatly accelerated by the entrance of Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin into the picture. His



U.S. "Pedal-Power"- 1878  
Bicycle-driven Airship of  
Prof. C.F. Ritchell, Conn.

first airship--named for himself, of course--was a gigantic 420 feet long, and had attained a speed of 17 mph by late 1900. That same year, the first confirmed flight of a dirigible in the United States was achieved by A. Leo Stevens in his "Pegasus."

Therefore, on the basis of what has been discovered by a succession of talented historical researchers, there were NO powered, controllable airships known to have been in the United States during the "airship" sightings of 1896 and 1897. And there were none having performance rating higher than "pathetic" anywhere in the world at that time. At least, there were none that are now known to aviation historians, though there is always a slim possibility that someone invented an airship or two, flew it all over the place with unprecedented performance and reliability, and then destroyed all traces of the marvelous machines.

Yet, is it really possible that there could have been "unknown airships" sailing through American skies in 1896-97, which then vanished completely? There were certainly enough patents granted by the U.S. Government for truly peculiar dirigibles that could have looked like the ones people claimed to have seen. It wouldn't have been totally impossible for a small group of inventors and craftsmen to have built and flown airships without their having become public knowledge until they decided it was time.

#### WERE THE U.S. "AIRSHIPS" REAL?

But could such airships have performed the way so many people said the airships of 1896-97 performed? The more closely one looks at the technology of the era, the less likely this seems. There are just too many ways in which the observed "airships" don't fit any American or foreign craft that could have been built in the 19th Century.

1. With few exceptions, the 1896-97 "airships" flew (at night). Yet, there was absolutely no air navigation system anywhere in the United States, because there were no known aircraft that needed one. And flying any kind of aircraft--be they airplanes or airships or helicopters--

(Continued on next page)

## AIRSHIPS, Cont.

(at night) without some navigational aids) ←  
is akin to attempted suicide.

In 1896, they were seen over the length of California--at least 500 miles in spread. Unless they flew along the Pacific coast in brilliant moonlight, their pilots would have had no possible way to determine their location, nor to figure out how to get where they wanted to go next. Since many of the sighting locations were many miles inland (Fresno, Sacramento, Modesto, Bakersfield, etc.), and bad weather was not uncommon, the moonlight-navigation technique is out of the question.

There were, to make matters even more difficult for the "airships" navigators, absolutely no radio stations upon which to home, nor were cities lighted sufficiently to permit navigation with more than a very slim chance of success. Indeed, even today, the lights of one city of 50,000 population look pretty much like those of most other cities of the same size.

2. If the "airships" of 1896-97 had actually been secret experimental projects, what happened to them, and why? After all, if an experiment succeeds (and certainly the performance of the 1896-97 "airships" was many years ahead of any known airships in the U.S. or even Europe), it hardly seems logical that they would have been discarded like failures.

No one knows for certain how fast the "airships" actually travelled, but many estimates at the time were in the range of 50-100 mph and higher. Yet, there is no record of any dirigible flying faster than 10 mph until a couple of years after the dual wave of sightings, and then the best speeds still were under 20 mph.

The times and locations of sightings should give some clue to the performance of the "airships," since it is very difficult to imagine simultaneous tests of two or more experimental craft in different locations, especially in view of the primitive state of communications in those bygone days. But on November 23, 1896, "airships" were reported from Chico, California, at 7 PM, and from Santa Rosa at 7:30 PM. Since those towns were (and still are) more than 100 miles apart, a speed as high as 200 mph is suggested.

Even allowing for great errors in the reported times, at least 100 mph is indicated, not counting the effects of the undoubtedly unfavorable winds for a flight in a southwesterly direction.

The following night it (or they) was seen from cities 700 miles apart, over a span of less than five hours, again pointing to a speed of more than 100 mph if one craft was involved. As an indication of what several decades of subsequent progress then produced, the U.S. Navy's dirigible "Akron" of 1931 had a top speed of about 75 mph, and the well-known Goodyear advertising blimps cruise at 35 mph and can reach 40 mph under ideal conditions.

But these later airships were powered by efficient engines developing hundreds of horsepower...and making noises appropriate to such power. The horsepower available back in the 1890's was pathetically small by comparison; in fact, the lack of a dependable, light-weight engine of 10-25 hp was the biggest single reason no airplane flew before 1903. As for noise, few of the people who reported seeing "airships" described any engine-like sounds coming from them. Sometimes they were said to have given off humming or whirring sounds, but never the crude rattling and banging so typical of the early gasoline engines.

## ELECTRIC POWER

Of course, there is the possibility that the 1896-97 "airships" were powered by electric motors, since some of the earliest of dirigibles had been so powered. But the electric motors of the day were so heavy and so weak that they would have been totally unable to drive airships at more than a few miles per hour. As an example, the electric power for the Renard-Krebs airship of 1884 produced a whopping 9 hp, while weighing a mere 1,100 lbs. !

Had someone--such as a secretive inventor of airships--been able to develop electric motors and batteries of great power and little weight, their value for other uses would have made him an overnight multi-millionaire. That this was next to impossible is borne out by the history of portable electric power, for it has just recently been used for the very first time to propel a small man-

Chicago Tribune, April 10, 1897:

EGG SHAPED WHEN SEEN IN WISCONSIN

Mysterious Aerial Visitor Appears to Two States Within a Period of half an hour

Wausau, Wis. April 9 - The airship made its appearance in Wausau last night about 10 o'clock and was viewed by at least 100 citizens. It came from the southeast, passing over the city going northwest. Lights could be seen attached to the ship. A dim outline of it could be seen, which appeared to be shaped like an egg.

Nebraska City, Neb. April 9 - At 9:30 o'clock last night several persons observed the lights of the supposed airship approaching from the southeast, and after passing over the city it disappeared, going due northwest when last seen.

LOOKED OBLONG AT MT. CARROLL, ILL; AIRSHIP AT THAT POINT WAS MOVING WEST AT A TERRIFIC RATE OF SPEED

Mount Carroll, Ill. April 9 - Hundreds of persons on the streets tonight--persons whose honesty and truthfulness are beyond doubt viewed the airship about 8:40 o'clock. It came from the northeast and when opposite this city changed speed. It was in sight at least 10 minutes. It appeared oblong in shape and carried a great red light. In length it did not appear to be over eight or ten feet, and two or three feet high. So many persons saw it there is no dispute (sic) the fact that something unusual appeared.

carrying airplane on a short flight. Moreover, many millions of dollars are being poured into research aimed at effective electric power for non-polluting automobiles. But as yet there has been little progress.

3. The reported provision of some of the "airships" with fixed or flapping wings, or even paddle wheels, may be of more psychological than technical significance. All of these devices can be found on patent drawings issued during the 1890's to inventors of fanciful airships, but their use on successful lighter-than-air craft is another matter entirely. Fixed wings (as on airplanes) could be used on dirigibles, but at the low speeds to which such craft were limited before 1900, they would have provided far too little lifting force to have been worth the trouble.

Flapping wings (as on birds) have aroused the imaginations of aeronautical dreamers since Leonardo da Vinci, some 500 years ago. The ornithopter, or flapping-wing airplane, remains very much a dream, though a limited amount of work is currently being done on it in hopes of eventually lifting a man off the ground for a short distance. But applying flapping wings to a dirigible would add so much weight and so much complexity, and would provide so little lifting force, that the result would probably be to keep an otherwise flyable airship thrash-

ing around on the ground.

As for paddle-wheel propulsion, it makes no more sense for an airship than it would for a bicycle, and has aroused even less serious interest among aeronautical designers than have flapping wings. Paddle wheels work reasonably well in a dense medium like water, but would be hopelessly inefficient in the air. And, like flapping wings, they would create so many problems and provide so little benefit, that the chances of an airship flying with them would be greatly reduced.

4. The bright lights seen on many of the "airships" (or, perhaps, the single "airship" seen all around the country?) are of little apparent value. They were generally compared with locomotive headlamps in brightness, and in most cases shone straight out the front of the "airship." But for what purpose? Even the super-powerful landing lights on giant modern airliners are not used to see straight ahead, but rather to light the runway immediately prior to landing. Thus, "airship" lights could hardly have been for navigation, nor could they have been for recognition by other "airships" (as landing lights now are often used in the vicinity of a busy airport), for there are no reports of more than one "airship" being seen at a time.

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## AIRSHIPS, Cont.

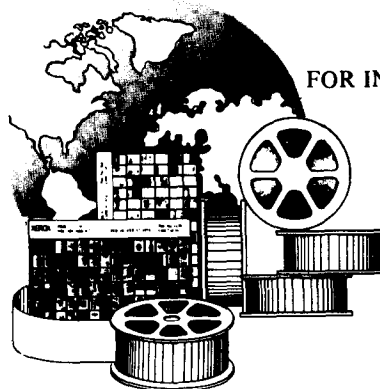
Even if there had been some logical purpose for the lights, how were they powered? Batteries in the 1890's were terribly heavy for their power, and the lifting ability of a relatively small (100 feet long or so) gas bag was barely enough to raise one man from the ground, let alone hundreds of pounds of batteries to power lights having no obvious function. Even more difficult to explain are the occasional instances of great search-lights that came from an "airship" and swept over cities such as Sistersville, W. Va., in the dead of night. These would have required far more power, thus more weight, yet had no understandable purpose.

5. Most witnesses reported the "airships" moving with fairly regular, steady motions, but some described them as moving erratically or even darting around. Sorry, but airships just don't do things like that! In fact, the Goodyear Blimps are the only flying machines in the United States which are not required to carry seat belts for the passengers. As a blimp pilot once told your surprised writer, "Don't worry, this thing never does anything abruptly!" Compared with an airplane, an airship is a great clumsy hulk, which floats rather than flies.

6. The geographical spread of sightings, especially in 1897, means that either there were several "airships" in action at once (and very well coordinated), or there was just one which had phenomenal performance. On November 12, 1896, for example, reports came in from Illinois, Kansas, and Iowa. On November 18, there were sightings reported from Texas, California, Colorado, West Virginia, and Nebraska (the latter two at exactly the same time, though more than 800 miles apart).

There were numerous claims by inventors and their agents that the mysterious "airships" were their secret experimental projects, and they would soon be revealed in all their elaborate detail. This, of course, never happened, and it is hard to imagine that such airships ever existed and then disappeared without leaving a trace. There is not a single example in recorded history of sophisticated technology being demonstrated and then completely lost.

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Some of the "airship" reports are undoubtedly fabrications, for they contain features that, in retrospect, make absolutely no sense. Reports, for instance, of the sounds of singing and music coming from an "airship". Or reports that the crew of one "airship" talked at length with witnesses and described plans to attack Havana harbor with bombs (the Spanish-American War was obviously in the offing, and may have precipitated this one).

So we are left with the only feasible explanation for the "airship" sightings of 1896-97: They must have been UFOs. They were generally shaped like UFOs, they had lights like UFOs, they made sound like UFOs, they flew around doing peculiar things like UFOs, and they never really bothered anyone, also very much like UFOs.

But, lest you get the idea that a mystery has been truly laid to rest, just stop and think for a moment. If the "airships" of 1896-97 were UFOs, they remain as much of a mystery as ever, for a UFO is nothing more than a flying object that has yet to be identified. And that's what the "airships" have been for eighty years.



# "MYSTERIOUS AIRSHIPS": A COMMENT

By Don Berliner  
(Aviation/Science Writer)

Dr. Winkler's discussion of "The Not-So-Mysterious Airships of 1896-97" raises as many questions as it answers. While the thoroughness of his research is commendable, his conclusions seem to this writer to be rather hard to support in light of the history of airship-related technology.

That there *could have been* powered lighter-than-air craft of unknown manufacture in the late 19th century can hardly be denied. But there could also be vicious cocker spaniels living in oxygen-filled caves on the far side of the Moon! However, in the absence of evidence, such assumptions are highly risky. And evidence of the actual existence of 19th century engine-driven airships in the U.S. simply cannot be found. Nowhere in all the vast collections of aeronautical historical material is there a single specific detail about such a device: Not a photograph, not a measurement, not an artifact, and not anything else that would suggest that even one of these things flew except in the imaginations of inventors and journalists.

And if such a machine had flown, why did it never become public knowledge? The performance described by hundreds of witnesses strongly suggests highly successful airships: fast, maneuverable, long-ranging. Yet none was ever seen except at a distance. Where were they built? Where were they based? Where did they end up? And, assuming such airships existed, why were they never capitalized upon? Why were none seen at pre-announced public displays, or in showrooms?

The first engine-driven airships known to have flown in the U.S. were those of Stevens and Boyce, who flew at Manhattan Beach, N.Y., in 1900. Prior to that, and dating back to 1863, the only powered airships in the U.S. were driven by pedals, like a bicycle, and hence capable only of quite feeble speed and very limited

range and duration of flight. Let's face it: pedalling a clumsy great gas-bag against even a gentle breeze is very hard work.

And that really points to the major argument against the "mysterious airships" having been secret U.S. craft: The state of the aeronautical arts in 1896-97 was such that airships having anything like the speed, range, and navigational capabilities of the reported craft would have required enormous advances in technology. Had such advances been made, their non-airship applications would have been so great that to have kept them secret and then let their secrets die would have cost their developers many millions of dollars in sales and royalties, and world-wide fame.

The great barrier to the development of aviation in those days was the absence of efficient engines. Gasoline engines put out a few horsepower and weighed hundreds of pounds; electric and steam powerplants were even worse. It wasn't until the Wright Brothers built a 12 hp engine that weighed around 200 lbs. (crude, by today's standards) that aviation stood a chance.

Had an efficient airship engine been available before the turn of the century, it would have found immediate application in airplanes, but that never happened. Prior to 1897, only Karl Wolfert, in Germany, had flown an airship with a gasoline engine, and his biggest that flew was less than 6 hp. The performance of known 19th century airships was pathetic, at best, with none capable of as much as 10 mph.

Even if suitable engines could have been built in total secrecy, could secret airships have flown where they were reported? Most sightings were at night, and they covered such widespread areas that either there were a large number of airships, or a few that ranged the entire country. Such flying demands some means of

navigation, especially at night: the crew must know where they are and they must be able to figure out how to get where they are headed. In 1896 and 1897, there was obviously no air navigation system in the U.S. There were no radio beacons upon which to home. There were no major roads to follow. There were no networks of well-lit cities whose unique patterns of lights would permit identification from the air.

Had there been air-to-ground radio in those days, someone on the ground might have been able to keep an airship pilot informed about his location. But useful radios were far in the future. (The first use from an airplane was in 1910.) Had our secret inventors come up with miraculous improvements in radio, they would have had to have been nuts to hold back the news.

And even if there had been such amazing radios, they would have required power for operation. The batteries of the day were huge and weak, and thus would have proven a great drain on the already over-taxed lifting ability of any pre-historic airship. This would have been true to an even greater extent for powerful search-lights said to have emanated from some of the airships. Hundreds of pounds of batteries would have been needed to run them, and their purpose is difficult to imagine.

What of the reported designs of the airships? Many were said to have had wings, oars, and even paddlewheels. Any of these appendages would have cost an airship far more than it produced, hence the total absence of anything of this sort on known airships. Wings built to the technology of the day would have provided so little lifting at the low speeds any possible engine could have produced, and they would have created so much

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# THE NOT-SO-MYSTERIOUS AIRSHIPS OF 1896-97

By Louis Winkler, PhD

(MUFON Consultant in Astronomy)

The mysterious airships of 1896-1897 have long fallen into the category of the unexplained or unidentified. But in the last decade or two, a new investigative tool has emerged in academe which sheds an entirely different light on the mysterious airship flap. The tool is a variety of microforms and readers that are used in connection with a nation-wide, interlibrary loan system which provides service copies of microforms. With this instrument it was possible for this writer to make a generous sampling of daily newspapers from the major cities of the U.S. from late 1896 to the spring of 1897, and draw new conclusions.

The sampling provides detailed evidence of a number of real balloon craft which were steerable or powered (airships). The areas most involved show an initial progress of activity from the west coast to the east coast, over a 5-month period. Reports of the flap start in the San Francisco area, then move to Omaha, Chicago, Nashville, and finally return to the central portion in Texas. News was quickly disseminated with the telegraph and appeared in countless newspapers. By the time the phenomena reached the Midwest, thousands of people were having sightings. And many of the reports would include landing accounts or interaction with the pilot, inventor, or passengers. The nation was a twitter with the idea that American inventors were close to discovering the "secret" of powered navigation. These balloon aircraft would just be the first of other major developments soon to follow in the field of transportation by air.

Sightings of one or more airships in the U.S. originated in the central coastal area of California during the late fall of 1896. The San Francisco

*Chronicle* published a series of articles in late November regarding an airship seen in the Sacramento area with the initial weak suggestion that it was a hoax. Some reports were to the effect that it was cigar-shaped with a framework underneath for two men to sit on bicycle-like structures. Other reports were that it was oval with outstretched wings and propellers, and in one instance the operators could be heard singing. By November 22 the *Chronicle* and the *Oakland Tribune* reported that "thousands" of people saw an airship in the Sacramento area.

With this ripple, a lawyer, George D. Collins, came to the forefront and explained that his client, E. H. "Aluminum" Benjamin, was the inventor and had been working on the ship for 7 years. Collins also described some of the flights of the ship, and indicated that many parts of it were manufactured in the eastern U.S. The ship apparently was dubbed the "U.S. Collins" and supposedly belonged to the Aerial Navigation and Irrigation Co.

The sensation was so great the San Francisco *Call* carried an engraving of an elongated airship with wings, causing the San Francisco *Examiner* on December 5, 1896 to publish a stiff rejection of the whole affair:

Fake journalism has a good deal to answer for, but we do not recall a more discernable exploit in that line than the persistent attempt to make the public believe that the air in this vicinity is populated with airships. It has been manifest for weeks that the whole airship story is pure myth.

If this amount of airship coverage bothered the publisher, Mr. Hurst, then what happened in the following months must have made him furious, because by mid-April of 1897 there was a deluge of accounts of airships throughout the country.

Additions to and variations of the accounts of the first sightings in

California appeared in eastern newspapers during April. The New York *Herald* of the 12th reported that the first cigar-shaped flying machine was seen on November 16th in the Sacramento area, and Collins revealed that this airship was 150 feet long, had two wings, and was controllable. C. A. Smith, president of the Atlantic and Pacific Aerial Navigation Co., indicated the airship would fly to the east coast soon. Another story of the first California sighting appeared in the April 18th issue of the *Pittsburgh Press*. The report here was that the first sighting was in Maryville, some 75 miles northeast of San Francisco. To what extent these California sightings are related is not clear.

## Concentration Areas

Reports of airships died down during the winter months, but according to the *Pittsburgh Press* an airship spent several weeks crossing the Rockies, and passed over Kansas and Iowa. Newspaper accounts were renewed when the *Chicago Tribune* reported on April 7, 1897 that hundreds saw an airship the night before in the Omaha area. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* of April 10th, however, reported that Omaha heard of the airship 6 months earlier, suggesting news originated in October of 1896. The New York *Herald* of April 12th said that the first sighting in the Omaha area was made on March 29th. Sightings in mid-April were so numerous that the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* of April 14th and 16th indicated that hundreds had seen it in Nebraska and Oklahoma, and even thousands around St. Louis.

By mid-April the airship flap had the Midwest stirred into a frenzy and reports were coming from all directions, but the most developed data came from sightings in the Chicago area. The *Chicago Tribune* of April

The author invites comment, c/o Dept. of Astronomy, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16801.

(continued on next page)

M. MARCH-82

## Airships, Continued

10th reported that hundreds sighted an airship in the Chicago area, many seeing wings. On the same day, the New York *Herald* gave insight into the nature of the elongated Chicago object. Max L. Harmar, secretary of the Chicago Aeronautical Association, said he was expecting the airship since he received word several weeks prior that a party of three had already left San Francisco.

Harmer described the vessel as powered and steerable, and it was just stopping off at Chicago in its flight to Washington D.C. Harmar also explained that Octave Chanute, president of the Chicago Aeronautical Association, had full information on the ship. Chanute was reported as being one of the wealthy sponsors of this airship venture. According to the New York *Times* of June 3, Chanute was running a secret airship farm not far from Chicago, and the New York *Herald* of April 13 reported the patent papers for the airship were already on file in Washington, D.C.

The Chicago *Tribune* was able to provide most of the information regarding the inventor of the Chicago airship. On April 12th they reported that the inventor's name was A. C. Clinton who lived in Omaha. The April 26th issue, however, suggested that A. C. Clinton was an alias and the probable inventor was a violin maker Clinton A. Case, an anagram of the alias. According to Secretary Wakefield of the Omaha Exposition, Case requested 87,000 sq. ft. of landing space at the exposition. Then, the next day the Chicago *Tribune* reported that Case lived in Chicago and he was already building model airships since 1892 in Rock Rapids, Iowa. Perhaps Omaha was mistakenly reported as the home of the inventor because another inventor, Alva J. Grover, a civil engineer who resided in Omaha, is reported as having shown plans for a steerable, powered, inflated machine. But to make things even more confused the New York *Herald* of April 13th reported that Oscar B. Booth, another airship inventor from Chicago, said the Chicago airship was Charles Clinton's who lived in Dodd

City, Kansas.

In the technical vein, the most compelling evidence for the existence of an airship seen in the Chicago area was the two photographs taken by Walter McCann which was reported in several of the major newspapers across the nation. Three other witnesses — G. A. Overstocker, W. Hoodles, and E. L. Osborne — saw the airship as well as McCann who took the photographs. These photographic plates were subject to "an acid test" and pronounced genuine. The witnesses themselves could even see through a telescope a man steering the cigar-shaped airship. Unfortunately these photographs do not seem to have survived. However, among the more prominent sources which declared the photos a fake were the Chicago *Tribune* of April 12 and Donald B. Hanlon in 1970. The *Tribune* explains that it was a fake because of "too much scope of lens." (?)

Another area from which detailed reports issued was Nashville, Tennessee. On April 25th the St. Louis *Post Dispatch* provided a remarkably detailed description of an airship shaped like a shad without its head and tail that landed in the Chattanooga area for repairs! In addition to wings and propellers there was a 9-foot passenger car beneath the balloon which carried two men. One of the pilots, Prof. Charles Davidson, reportedly left Sacramento a month earlier.

Interestingly enough, the May 7th issue of the Chicago *Tribune* gives a description of another airship, also in a very convincing style. Prof. Arthur W. Barnard of Nashville demonstrated take-off and control of a balloon before hundreds at the Tennessee Centennial Exposition grounds. His balloon was elongated with propellers and had a bicycle underneath for the pilot to use, primarily for take-off. The New York *Times* of May 7th specified the airship length as 40 feet and width as 20 feet. Since we presently live in the age where humans have been landed on the moon repeatedly, it is difficult for us to imagine the sensation created in the horse and buggy days by the ap-

pearance of a controlled balloon. The *Tribune* report indicated that in the case of Barnard's demonstration "people refused to believe their eyes."

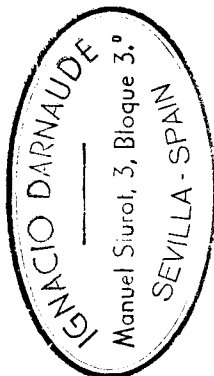
The New York *Herald* of April 14th expressed exasperation with the airship situation and said it "seems impossible to get anything reliable now about the airships." They then proceeded to describe a steam driven airship named "Pegasus" which had solved the problem of aerial navigation and had spent the last month flying about. This airship was supposedly assembled 10 miles from Lafayette, Tennessee with parts from Chicago, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis.

Numerous other accounts of inventors at work were briefly given in newspapers that spring. According to the Dallas *Morning News* of April 6th another pioneer, G. M. Padgitt of Springfield, Missouri, had been making balloon ascensions in the several weeks past. And among the inventors with a reputation who were secretly working at the time was Samuel P. Langley of the Smithsonian Institute. As early as May 14, 1896 the New York *Tribune* reported that Alexander G. Bell described Langley's invention as a steam driven aerodrome which looked like a large bird. On April 13th the St. Louis *Post Dispatch* indicated that Prof. Henry S. Pritchett of Washington University claimed that Langley's invention was able to carry a man several hundred feet.

## Dubious Accounts

By no means were all the newspaper accounts along the lines of pioneering efforts by inventors of airships, secretly or openly. A few of the stories seemed distinctly different in character because of features difficult or impossible to believe. The New York *Herald* of April 12th reported that John A. Herson, electrician from San Jose, by December 1 had already been on a trip with the inventor of an airship. Over a 2-day period they were supposed to have made a trip to Honolulu and back. This was a trip of over 4,000 miles which had to be made at an average speed of 80 mph.

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# The 1897 Flap

EXPLAINED

This revealing article has been reprinted from BUFORA JOURNAL by kind permission of Dr. Geoffrey Doel and by courtesy of the BRITISH UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION.

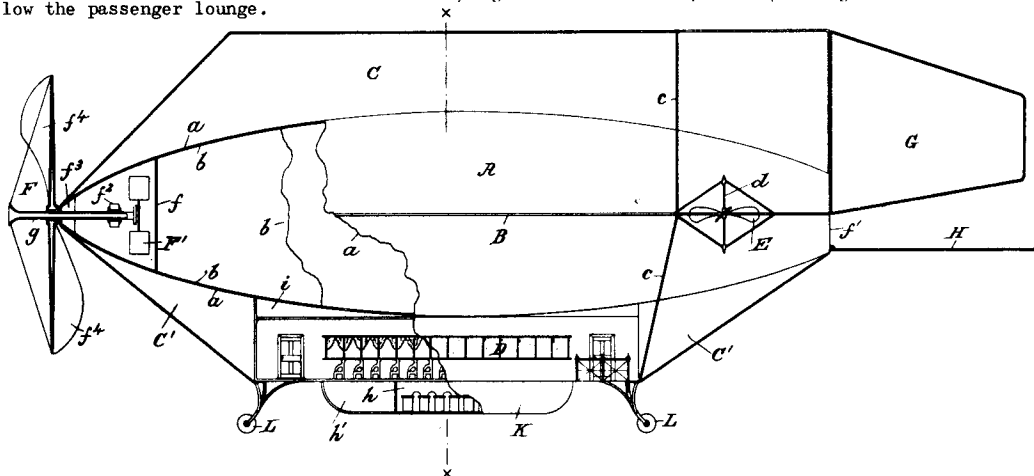
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Pennington's Airship design, patented 31st December 1895. Note the battery compartment below the passenger lounge.



## DID PENNINGTON BUILD THE 1897 U.S.A. AIRSHIP ?

Speculation as to the origin of the 'Airship' reported over the central States of the U.S.A. in 1897 has resulted in many theories and at least one of these attributes the sightings to the activities of a peculiar antique sort of U.F.O. I understand that the reason that the craft looked very much like the current airship design already flying in Europe is that the U.F.O. denizens wished to present their ship to the natives in a manner that would be acceptable and understandable. However the airship in question did not seem to be at all anxious to present itself, operating as it did almost exclusively by night and skulking during daylight hours in out of the way places.

Witnesses of the airship were often men of excellent reputation for veracity and often crowds of onlookers were able to compare experiences.

The descriptions tallied to a remarkable degree. It seems clear also that some of the sightings of night flying objects were of quite a different category and to present day ufologists may be recognised as being the result of 'normal' U.F.O. activity.

From the reports still in existence it is possible to build up a very good idea of the type of dirigible involved and there is no doubt that in many respects it was similar to airships already built and flying in Europe particularly in France. In 1884 Renard and Krebs devised and built an electrically propelled airship called 'La France' which made a circular flight of five miles at its first appearance.

It would indeed have been strange if there had been no parallel activities in the U.S.A. at that time. Resources of material and money were there in abundance and among the fertile brains of a rapidly growing scientifically orientated community was there no person of sufficient genius engineering ability and wealth to take up the aerial challenge ?

I believe there was and I believe that his name was Edward J. Pennington.

Pennington was born in Franklin, Indiana in 1858 and as a boy showed remarkable engineering aptitude and as he developed into manhood he displayed remarkable initiative, charm and persuasiveness. With these attributes it was not long before he was running his own factory and at the age of twenty-three had patented a reciprocating head for planing machines the first of a continuous stream of patents which flowed from his active brain until his death in 1911.

He was ruthless too and could exhibit considerable showmanship in order to further his own ideas. A characteristic of Pennington which in this context is significant was the secrecy he achieved to protect his projects and his habit of quietly dropping one idea in favour of another with little regard to the financial outcome.

By 1885 Pennington had acquired sufficient capital to set up the Standard Machine Works in Defiance Ohio and two years later he created two further firms: to make pulleys and wood-working machinery. A flood of Pennington Patents were registered at this time at Fort Wayne.

There were rumours of a company capitalised at one million dollars in Oswego, Kansas and another at Cincinnati with factories to produce 'Freight Elevators'. (Could this phrase possibly have been a euphemism for load-carrying Airships ?)

After a brief appearance at Edinburg, Illinois, where he collected some 50,000 dollars from the inhabitants for yet another 'pulley works' he came to rest at Mount Carmel, Illinois in 1890.

Now things begin to develop . . . . . this new Company was actually entitled 'The Mount Carmel Aerial Navigation Company' and fresh patents included a four cylinder radial engine . . . . "for the propulsion of an aerial vessel". He also let it be known, that he was "readying a vessel to fly from Mount Carmel to New York".

In 1891 he exhibited a captive airship some thirty feet long and six feet in diameter. It flew in a circle propelled by an airscrew turned electrically. The current was conveyed by wires in the tethering cable.

In 1893 he turned his attention to motor driven vehicles and again a spate of patents flooded from the Pennington brain. Soon he was making motor-cycles in Cleveland, Ohio and here he invented the first balloon tyre.

Such giddy progress was bound to meet with reverses and due to his dogmatic attitude and ruthless decisions he began to make enemies: yet his uncanny instinct for avoiding trouble kept him from falling foul of the law.

During 1894 he joined Thomas Kane who made kerosene engines widely used in dairies for milk separation. This event is most important in this thesis which will be evident later. Here, in Racine on the shores of lake Michigan they financed a really large concern for the development of petrol engines.

1.883

As I frequently took photos of the sun, when its disc showed spots and faculae, I decided to take pictures also of this rare and interesting phenomenon of the passage of the bodies across the sun. For this purpose I replaced in the same equatorial, the objective (lens) of 16 cms. by another of equal strength, with a chemical focus (suitable for photographic work) and the eye-piece with a photographic chamber. After several attempts at adjusting the equipment, I succeeded in taking several pictures, from which I sent to "L'ASTRONOMIE" the most interesting one. While I took these photographs an assistant counted the bodies with the equatorial finder (telescope). The picture has been taken using a wet plate at 1/100 of a second. This speed did not leave me time for titrating and conveniently preparing the baths, also the negative might be a little stained by the developer. The focus is not quite on the sun but rather on the body which was of more interest on this occasion.

Although at first glance at the projection, all bodies appear to be round or spherical, one can observe on several photos that the objects are not spherical but mostly of an irregular shape.

I have said that in the projection of the field of the telescope these bodies appeared luminous and stood out like brilliant trails; but when crossing the solar disc, they looked opaque. When studying the photo and the negative closely, one notes a body surrounded by a nebulosity and dark trails, which appeared brilliant after leaving the face of the sun.

This makes me believe that the bright trails when crossing the face, absorbed the actinic light of the sun or reduced its photographic properties. In the afternoon, clouds made all observation impossible. However I took steps and established an observation plan, in case the phenomenon repeated itself the following day.

On August 13th, the first two hours of the day offered a clouded sky until 8 o'clock in the morning. Then the clouds started to disperse a little and I was able to watch. Immediately the same phenomenon reappeared, and during the 45 minutes allowed us by the sky, we counted 116 bodies traversing the solar disc.

Immediately after the observations of the 12th, I sent telegrams to the Observatories of Mexico and Puebla, asking them to watch the phenomenon, but it was invisible from these Observatories. In order to verify by indirect means the approximate distance of these groups of objects, I carefully adjusted the finder of the telescope, the equatorial and a 10 cms. diameter Foucault silver mirror telescope, aiming them at the sun and the bodies. I had during the night the opportunity of directing this set-up at the planets and the Moon, which had been in the first quarter for the past two days, without changing the focus, and only the Moon was nearly at the focus.

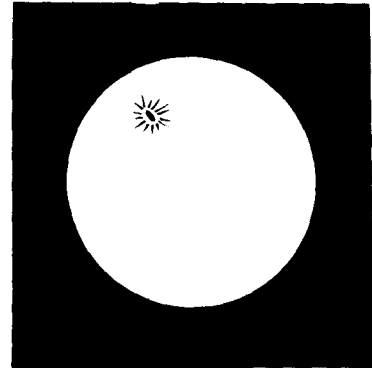
☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

From: Galway College Library, Ireland.

Translation Credit: L.Beer, W.Lasich, D.Sarkar.

Research Credit: William Lasich.

Sketch of the Photograph, showing object moving towards the lower right of the Sun.



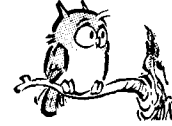
In view of the phenomenon being invisible at Mexico and Puebla and elsewhere, makes me believe that these bodies were comparatively close to the Earth, and at a lesser distance than the Moon, and that their considerable parallax was the reason that at Mexico and Puebla they were projected outside the solar disc.

Signed: Jose A. y Bonilla,  
Director of the Zacatecas Observatory,  
Mexico.

L'ASTRONOMIE Editor's Note: The observation of Monsieur Bonilla is extremely interesting and not easy to explain. The dates of August 12th and 13th make us think of flying stars at that period, however, it would be unique for nothing to have been observed at either Mexico or at Puebla. Were these birds? We have studied with great attention the photograph, of which Fig.119 represents a reproduction; the black object is of oval shape, preceded and followed by thin trains, its length is of 0.9 mm, its width 0.6-7 mm, the solar diameter 66 mm (the star is not in focus but the object is.) Outside the Sun, the trains appeared to be brilliant. We tend to believe that it is a question of birds, insects or higher forms of dust, in any case the bodies belong to our atmosphere.



SPACELINK Editor's Note: In 1883 photography was a complicated business, and photographic plates were not used indiscriminately. The actual reproduction in L'ASTRONOMIE shows the Sun with an oblong dot approaching its centre. An official at the British (Natural History) Museum turned over a tome by Wallace and provided the following details: lapwings had been recorded flying at 8,500 feet, cranes at 15000 feet and a flock of geese is recorded as flying over the Himalayas as high as 29,000 feet. (Some wags at the office have asked whether the geese were wearing oxygen masks or going by Boeing. However, the estimated altitudes may well result from optical illusions.) As the Zacatecas Observatory would only be at about 8,200 feet, high-flying birds are a possibility although one would expect the Director of an observatory to recognise them if such were the case. The speed of the objects crossing the Sun indicates that they were close to earth, also the focusing of the telescope. The big "but" is: would high-flying birds, insects or dust, etc., produce trains or trails in the atmosphere, or is this indeed THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPH OF A UFO?



## FOR AND AGAINST

Consider the words of British aviation authority and historian, Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, as quoted in the outstanding British UFO magazine, *Flying Saucer Review*: "Speaking as an aeronautical historian who specializes in the periods before 1910, I can say with certainty that the only airborne vehicles carrying passengers, which could possibly have been seen anywhere in North America in 1897 were free-flying spherical balloons, and it is highly unlikely for these to be mistaken for anything else. No form of dirigible (i.e. a gasbag propelled by an airscrew) or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying, or indeed could fly, at this time in America."

Mr. Gibbs-Smith, M.A., F.M.A., is an Honorary Companion of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

Ref: F.S.R. Volume 12 No.4.

SPACELINK does not exclude the possibility that there may have been a few genuine cases of UFO activity in 1897.

The hypothesis put forward to explain the airship in terms of a flying saucer, is that the Occupants wanted to present themselves in contemporary terms so that witnesses would not think the machine too out of place in 1897. This tongue-in-cheek hypothesis is let us face it, rather hard to swallow.

The policy of SPACELINK is to look for the obvious rather than the devious and we consider the obvious explanation fits the facts.

The editor was glad to be able to supply Dr. Doel with some of the material.

Captain Hooton's own sketch of the Airship he saw on 20 April 1897.

Note the large lighted passenger lounge at the base of the craft; also the ropes for adjusting the large ailerons.

They patented among other things an 'electric igniter' for petrol driven engines which was really the first sparking plug, in 1895. In this year Pennington visited England and took some of his vehicles with him.

Exercising his well-known assurance and charm he persuaded Henry J. Lawson a successful manufacturer of bicycles to purchase patents to the tune of half a million dollars. He was still here in 1896 and entered the Brighton Run. After an altercation with Mons. Leon Bollée his claim to have won the event was not disputed. After this he commuted frequently between England and America so that he could very well have participated in the aerial demonstrations in the U.S.A. late in 1896 and during 1897.

In December 1895 he had deposed with the American Patents Office the design for full sized Airship. Many of the features of this design are so close to those described by witnesses of the aerial ship seen in 1896 and 1897 that on this evidence alone one would suspect that Pennington could have been responsible.

Basing the scale of the design on the size of the passenger seats the overall length of the ship would be about 140 ft. The keel beneath which provided accommodation for the crew and passengers also housed large batteries and extended for 70 ft. with an equal amount of overhang of the envelope at each end. At the front end of the envelope a large airscrew about 50 ft. from tip to tip provided traction. At the rear an ample rudder and a horizontal fin allowed control of direction.

At the sides two horizontally disposed propellers furnished lateral 'trimming'. Along the top of the ship a high dorsal fin would help to prevent sideways drift and yawing at slow speeds. Altogether a very impressive aeronautical design for that period of time.

It is probable that the finished airship based on this plan would deviate in minor details. Perhaps laterally placed aircrews were found to give a better lift and control if suitably shaped.

Wings or large ailerons above the envelope would also help to provide lift if suitably angled. In 1895 during his motorcycle phase Pennington was heard to remark: "Suppose I have a cycle, screw driven, making a mile a minute . . . just suppose that . . . then suppose that I put aeroplanes on that machine . . . and they are under good control, what then?"

The sighting of the Airship on the ground in 1897 by Capt. Hooton at 6 p.m. on about 20th April is usually regarded as a true account of his experience which he recounted in the Little Rock, Arkansas, Gazette. He was, he said, out hunting near Homan when he heard the sound of 'pumping' like the noise of a Westinghouse locomotive brake.

Going in the direction of the sound he was amazed to behold "the famous airship" in an open space. A man wearing dark glasses was doing something at the rear of the ship. As he approached four other men appeared.

During the ensuing conversation there was no doubt in his mind that the crew were American. When the ship was ready, three large 'wheels' started to rotate on either side of the airship and with a hissing sound she took off. The 'aeroplanes' on top of the envelope sprang forwards and the ship rapidly gained height and speed.

(For a more detailed account of this sighting please refer to the JULY/AUG. 1966 issue of 'The Flying Saucer Review').

The 'pumping noise' is of great significance. This noise is noted in at least three of the sightings. Twice it was referred to as being similar to that made by a milk separator. This is almost conclusive, it was Thomas Kane whom Pennington joined in 1894 who made the motors for these separators.

All witnesses agree that there were lights aboard in abundance with one very bright searchlight which was seen to dim as the airship accelerated.

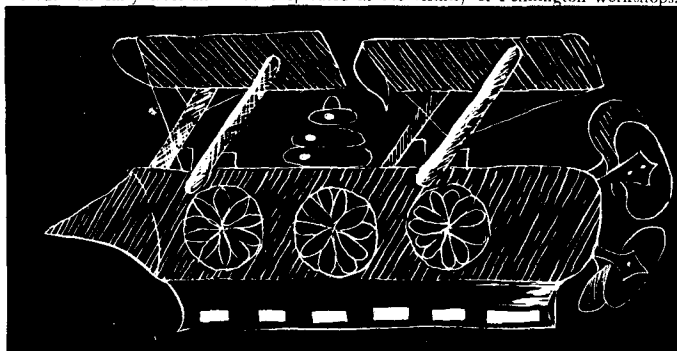
One witness encountering the aeronaut grounded claims to have asked why he turned the light on and off so much. He replied, no doubt truthfully that it consumed a great deal of motive power. We are led to the conclusion that Pennington's ship was propelled by a petrol-electric, or diesel-electric system. A bank of large batteries would be charged by a motor driven dynamo and would then operate electric motors geared to the airscrew(s). This system was widely used for the propulsion of road vehicles in the early years of this century.

After a trip of some miles it might be necessary to land to recharge batteries. Such a propulsion system would be well within Pennington's capabilities at this time.

The crew referred to by some witnesses included a woman, and it was customary for Pennington to take his wife on most of his exploits. (He married three times but I cannot find record of any children). Also a bearded man.

I have a photograph of Pennington with one of his vehicles and here he is accompanied by a man with a beard. Pennington himself was tall and of good physique. He usually sported a rather long dark moustache.

The next evidence required towards proving that the ship was not only terrestrial but Pennington's is to plot the course of the airship from recorded sightings during the 'voyages' of 1897 and to show that its speed was within the capabilities of such an early craft and that it operated in the vicinity of Pennington workshops.



Here I suggest the reader obtains a good large scale map of the central States of America. Those included in the Encyclopaedia Britannica of 1911 are most useful being nearly contemporary.

Two series of sightings occurred in 1897.

**Expedition One.** Starting from Pennington's base at Oswego, Kansas, to Belleville, Kansas, to arrive March 25th, thence to Sioux City some 200 miles northwards travelling at night. Making around 40 mph and in fair weather the six or so hours of darkness would allow easy arrival by 28th March. Here the ship landed and charged batteries?

Turning southwards an easy night run of 100 miles allowed late worshippers leaving church at Omaha, Nebraska to view the aerial visitor. Continuing via Lincoln and Beatrice on the southerly run arrival at Everest, Kansas on April 1st., another 100 miles apart. In fact Kansas City was reached quite early at 8.15.

Back to base at Oswego without serious mishap on about the 3rd. April.?

After this there are three possibilities. a) Pennington flew to Racine on lake Michigan by April 9th keeping to out-of-the-way landing sites b) The ship was partly dismantled and carried by rail in Pennington's closed rail cars to Racine. c) That Thomas Kane had another similar airship at Racine. I would suggest (b) as being the most probable in the circumstances. Pennington had the resources and the experience in moving large objects by rail from place to place, vide his captive airship which was shown at exhibitions at Chicago and elsewhere.

**Expedition Two.** The Airship would have taken the air on the evening of April 9th. 1897 and leaving Racine some 60 miles from Chicago was seen first north of the city and then to south-east at 9.30 p.m. passing over the lake.

Turning westwards the ship would have reached vicinity of Eldon in Iowa some 200 miles after five hours at around forty m.p.h. Spending the day of 10th on ground at some secluded spot the batteries would again be charged and ready for the take-off on evening of April 10th. Then passing over Eldon westwards to Ottumwa (10 miles) at 7.25 and 7.40 p.m. respectively the ship is seen near Albia 25 miles further on at about 8.10 p.m. This chain of sightings allows some estimation of the airship's speed, — 35 miles in 45 minutes which is better than 45 m.p. Wind speed must be taken into account but from the sighting reports the weather during this period seems to have been remarkably calm.

Steering now towards the north-west apparently en route for Racine the ship would have passed near Mount Carroll but the date given for the airship over this city is April 9th. One must conclude that if this date is correct that the craft passed near this city on the westward leg of its journey before turning south-east towards Eldon. This is perfectly possible on the time schedule estimated.

However, and here one must speculate on Pennington's movements, it is not certain how the airship arrived at its next point at Yates Center, Kansas on April 19th. It could well have travelled at night over the next week or so southwards which would be well within its 40 m.p.h. capabilities. Or, it may have returned to Racine and have been once more despatched by rail.

At Yates Center there was the unfortunate incident of a young heifer becoming entangled in the mooring rope on take-off. Then south-east and a fairly long haul 400 miles to near Texarkana, but at 40 m.p.h. only ten hours of darkness were necessary. Here the ship was obliged to land on April 21st. to recharge batteries. In the evening when all was ready for take-off the airship was spotted by one Capt. J. Hooton whose detailed report is well known.

Airborne again and travelling in a leisurely manner Hot Springs, Arkansas was reached on May 6th. Once more the ship landed and was encountered by the Law Officers, Constable Sumpter and Deputy Sherriff Mc.Lemore. Both these gentlemen have sworn affidavits to their evidence in which they tell of a bearded mechanic and of a young woman. There was also a young man who was engaged in filling a water bag. They were informed that the ship was en route for Nashville, Tennessee. This may well have been so, but I feel that it was not long before it was once again safely at Oswego, Kansas with Pennington highly satisfied with his aerial exploits. There is little evidence of its re-appearance.

From the foregoing evidence it must be conceded that the itinerary followed by the 1897 airship was not particularly miraculous even for a craft of that period, only it took place in America where hitherto no such aerial exploits had been seen. No wonder then, that the onlookers became scared and confused, suspecting a work of the Devil. The only Devil responsible was in my opinion one eccentric, brilliant inventor named Edward Joel Pennington.

Of course there are so many questions left unanswered. For instance why did Pennington decide to drop the whole project just when fame and fortune might seem to have been within his grasp? I would suggest that he was clever enough to realise that his airship, though a very remarkable invention had very severe limitations which could not readily be overcome.

There would be little prospect of increasing the battery capacity without making the ship larger and unwieldy. It was obviously very much a fine weather craft and he had been extraordinarily lucky to have had such a long spell of fine, calm weather for his trials.

Also he would have realised that until the internal combustion engine could be improved considerably in size and reliability the whole airship project had better be shelved. The new and more financially rewarding field of the motor car must have seemed to Pennington to offer much better prospects of immediate financial rewards. He must also have known that there were aeronautical designers in Europe who had forged ahead in the airship field with whom he could hardly compete.

In the Motor Museum at Beaulieu, Hampshire there is a very rare vehicle. It is an 1896 Pennington motor-tricycle. It is worth looking at closely. The twin-cylinder, water cooled engine functions by fuel injection and the ignition system is remarkably ingenious, operating an early form of spark plug on each cylinder. The wheels have wire spokes and are furnished with wide tyres of modern cross section. It is a really remarkable piece of advanced engineering for its time and marks its designer Pennington as a brilliant engineer of foresight and genius.



DR. OLAVO T. FONTES

It is with a sense of deep sorrow that we must inform the members of APRO and affiliated organizations of the death of Dr Olavo T. Fontes. APRO's Brazilian representative on May 9, 1968 of cancer. Since 1957 when the Doctor requested membership in APRO he had represented the great South American republic of Brazil in UFO Research. His accomplishments have been many. Had it not been for his efforts many recent volumes dealing with UFOs would be slim indeed, for most of the books which enjoyed public consumption in the last two years drew heavily upon his material.

Dr. Fontes was only 43, he left a wife and three children.

This short tribute is part of a detailed article published in THE A.P.R.O. BULLETIN, May 1968, published by APRO, 3910 E. Kleindale Road, Tucson, Arizona 85716, U. S. A.

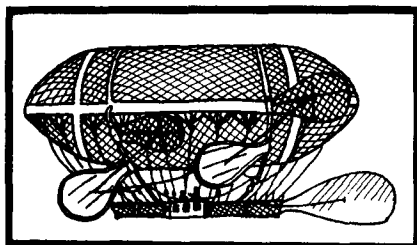


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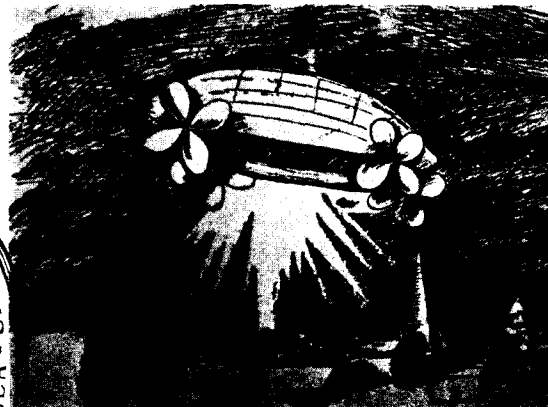
Geoffrey G. Doel.  
September 1968.

LAST NOVEMBER A CASE OF DANGEROUS DRIVING WAS DISMISSED AGAINST JOHN DOW, 19, IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND. HE TOLD THE COURT THAT HE AND HIS COMPANION DIVED OUT OF A MOVING CAR IN NAPIER AFTER "A FLYING SAUCER WHIZZED CLOSE ABOVE US." THE CAR THEN SPED DRIVERLESS FOR 200 YARDS AND CRASHED INTO A SHOP.





Count Lennox's air-ship, "The Eagle" of 1835. This machine was on view in London but passed into obscurity.



How long has this been going on? The woodcut above appeared in an 1897 newspaper to illustrate the strange "airship" which was seen in many of the southwestern and midwestern states during the Gay Nineties "saucer flap."

## THE 1897 CONTROVERSY

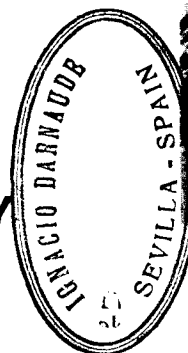
THE PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 1897 UFO

by Kenneth Lloyd Larson

During my research I have determined that the 1896-1897 wave must have been the result of an intelligent pattern established by an unidentified flying object. This analysis is based on sensible reasoning and research, with a study of the original newspaper reports. One of the first reports came from the area of San Francisco and Oakland, California. According to the Oakland Tribune, commuters boarding a ferry in San Francisco on the evening of 24 November 1896 said they saw an 'egg-shaped' object moving quickly through the sky. This ferry left San Francisco at 6.15 p.m. and arrived in the Alameda-Oakland area around 6.50 p.m. The witnesses said that the object followed the ferry and hovered over the dock in Alameda. Then it disappeared to the north-east at high speed. Oddly enough, a San Francisco witness said that he could not see any wings or propellers on the craft.

At about 7.00 p.m. on this same evening, a telegram arrived from Red Bluff, with the statement that many residents saw an egg-shaped object pass over that city at high speed. The distance from Red Bluff to San Francisco equals about 162 miles. It is possible that the object traced the course of the Sacramento River between Oakland and the northern city. Witnesses seemed to have described the same object over both cities, with a time interval of about 10 minutes. Simple reasoning seems to make clear that the UFO would have had a velocity of around 1,000 miles per hour. However, the first American plane flight by the Wright brothers was not made until 17 December 1903.

Secondly, the residents of Sistersville, West Virginia, were awakened around 5.00 a.m., 19 April 1897. The witnesses said that a tube-like object, with red and green lights along the sides, hovered over the small town, playing a brilliant searchlight on the ground. One resident was so startled that he pulled the whistle on the main factory, awakening everybody. The reader should note that newspapers said the object hovered over the town around 5.00 a.m. This is very significant, and the date of 19 April is noteworthy. Another object reportedly appeared over Yates Center, Kansas, where it was seen by several witnesses, on the same day



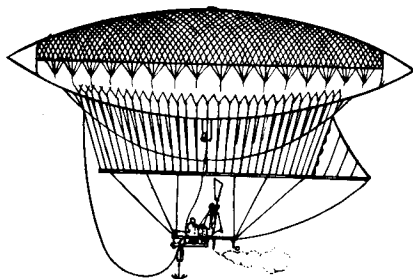
of 19 April 1897. The distance between Sistersville, West Virginia, and Yates Center, Kansas, equals about 800 miles.

A British researcher has claimed that the craft over Yates Center was a man-made dirigible, with a maximum speed of around 40 miles per hour. As the reader can see, the dirigible would have taken about 20 hours to cover the 800 miles between Sistersville and Yates Center. In order to be over Sistersville at 5.00 a.m. on 19 April, a dirigible would have had to have left Yates Center around 9.00 a.m. on 18 April. In the same way, if the object had left Sistersville at 5.00 a.m. on 19 April, it would not have arrived over Yates Center until 20 April, because of the speed of 40 miles per hour. The logical conclusion seems to be that the object had a much higher velocity, so as to be over the two cities on the same day of 19 April. Thus, the vehicle would have been a UFO and not a dirigible.

The weakness of the dirigible theory is that the newspaper reports of that period in America abound with various claims from inventors, all claiming that they had sent up the unidentified aerial object. I should know, I read the original newspaper reports from San Francisco and Oakland, published in thick volumes from the newspaper rooms of libraries. Consequently, these two simple examples show that the UFO researcher has to study the reports and witnesses and then think out the logical conclusions. I can only conclude that the 1896-1897 UFOs must have had a high velocity, much higher than anything manufactured around that period in America. This velocity could have been as high as 1,000 miles per hour. Indeed, it could compare to the estimate made by pilot Kenneth Arnold over Mount Rainier, Washington, 24 June 1947. Arnold checked the sweep-second hand of his plane's clock and arrived at a velocity of around 1,700 miles per hour. He couldn't believe this figure and lowered it to about 1,300 miles per hour. Another example: On 23 April 1897, farmer Daniel Gray said that a UFO had passed over his farm near Flint, Michigan. A dry and preserved newspaper fluttered to the ground, and he discovered that it was from Toronto, Canada, with the date of 5 October 1896. Oddly enough, the length of time between these two dates

comes to exactly 200 days!

This article, by Kenneth Lloyd Larson, Director of VICTORY RESEARCH, of 5630 Sawtelle Boulevard, Culver City, California 90230, U.S.A., relates to an article by Dr Geoffrey Doel which appeared in the October 1968 issue of SPACELINK - THE 1897 FLAP EXPLAINED. Kenneth Lloyd Larson's article, and the following correspondence, should be read in conjunction with Dr Doel's original article.



This balloon flew above Paris on 24 September, 1852. Invented by Henri Giffard, powered by a steam engine driving a 3-bladed propeller at 110 rpm, it achieved a speed of 6 mph.

SPACELINK has also received a letter on the 1897 flap from Bernard O'Connor of 132 East 16 Street, Northampton, Pa. 18067, U.S.A. The following are extracts.

'Dr Doel's article was an excellent job of research and reporting that cleared up an age-old mystery. However it may have inadvertently solved another age-old mystery. First of all I would like to quote Dr Doel's article. "However, and here one must speculate on Pennington's movements, it is not certain how the airship arrived at its next point at Yates Center, Kansas on April 19th. It could well have travelled at night over the next week or so southwards which would be well within its 40 mph capabilities. Or, it may have returned to Racine and have been once more despatched by rail. At Yates Center there was the unfortunate incident of a young heifer becoming entangled in the mooring rope on take-off."

Mr O'Connor then quotes from pages 12/13 of the late Frank Edwards' book FLYING SAUCERS - SERIOUS BUSINESS, the famous case of farmer Alexander Hamilton of Le Roy, Kansas who saw one of his cows being abducted by the occupants of an 'airship'.

Mr O'Connor continues, 'In this passage Hamilton states that his cow was "appropriated" by an airship on Monday 19 April 1897. It then disappeared in the north-west, yet the remains of the heifer were found about four miles west of Le Roy! Why? That question is easy to answer once you review the facts.

1. Pennington was travelling south-west from Mt. Carroll to Yates Center. To arrive there he had to bypass Le Roy.
2. It took him a week to reach Yates Center: 10 April 1897 - 19 April 1897.
3. Le Roy is 15 miles north-east of Yates Center.
4. It's 400 miles to Texarkana. In my opinion one can develop quite an appetite on such a journey.

After Pennington made off with Hamilton's heifer, he butchered it, then dropped the carcass from his ship. While he was attending to the animal, his ship was completing an arc which enabled him to set course for Yates.'

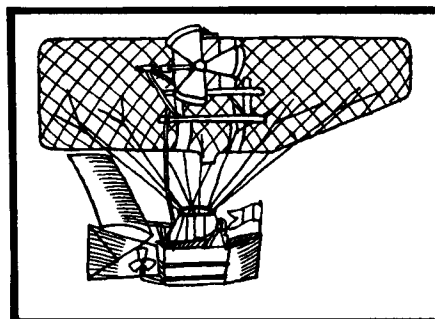
Dr Doel comments as follows:

In his very interesting article entitled 'The performance characteristics of the 1897 UFO', Mr Larson refers to an egg-shaped object which appeared at several points around the San Francisco area in November 1896. Apparently no wings or propeller were seen on the craft, and timing gave it a speed up to 1,000 m.p.h. From the description of this 'craft', which in no way resembled the famous airship, I am sure that any experienced UFOlogist would recognise a type of UFO which has been reported on several occasions in recent years from many parts of the world, Valensole in southern France (1965) and Socorro in New Mexico (1964) to give two instances. Also the dates do not tally with the 1897 airship sightings.

The sighting Mr Larson reports from Sistersville on the other hand evidently referred to Pennington's airship, and helps to fill in the question of its whereabouts after 10 April 1897. As the ship was seen at Sistersville at about 5.00 a.m. on 19 April 1897, there is absolutely no reason why it should not have arrived at Le Roy near Yates Center by 10.30 p.m. of the same day as recorded by farmer Hamilton whose heifer was abducted. Allowing 5.30 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. on 19 April, there would be 17 hours available flying time at 47 m.p.h. to cover the 800 miles. With a slight following wind, this fits in perfectly with the estimated performance of the Pennington airship. I am very grateful for the information from Mr Larson which has helped to fill in the airship's itinerary.

Mr Bernard O'Connor also helps to trace the airship's movements while at Le Roy, and refers to the discovery of the remains of the heifer (head, skin and legs) which were found a few miles away the next day by a Mr Link Thomas who thought someone had butchered a stolen beast. Of course someone had - Pennington's crew in fact - so that one must now regard the heifer as abducted, not caught up by accident.

Recently I have come across a claim by Pennington that he did build and fly an airship. This is the first admission I have read of which helps to consolidate the theory from his own lips, although one must admit that Pennington was given to making extravagant assertions.



"L'Esperance", an immense dirigible constructed by Delamarne, flew on several occasions during 1865-6.

More reports:

Researchers continue to find reports of the 1897 airship in newspapers of the period. The following is a report from THE DAILY KENNEBEC JOURNAL, Augusta, Maine, of 12 April 1897.

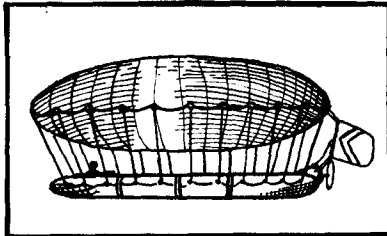
'Sioux City, La., April 11. Many claim to have seen the airship. Up to date, however, it has invariably been on the wing on such occasions. R.H. Butler, of this county, claims he caught it "roosting".

'His account is as follows: "Every Saturday I drive into Sioux City. On my return last week, I reached the driveway near my house about 12.15 a.m. and turned in to get to my barn. I had gone about half the way when I saw light just over the off horse's ear. I strained my eyes, and when I got a good look, I nearly fell off the seat. I was looking at a ship. At the top was what I took for a big, cigar-shaped balloon. It was about 35 feet long, 10 or 12 feet thick and lay on its side. Underneath it was a car something like those on the Ferris Wheel at the World's Fair. It had a row of windows along the side and the light shone through them. As I approached, the folks in the boat heard me and they started into the air. It sounded like a bunch of quail going up. In four or five minutes the ship went out of sight, traveling toward the south. I think it rose at an angle of 40 or 45 degrees."

'The general opinion among his neighbors is that Butler had been drinking before he left town.'

Source: SKYLOOK, Box 129, Stover, Mo. 65078, U.S.A.

Santos-Dumont fitted a petrol engine to an airship in 1898 and flew the craft round the Eiffel Tower.



Printed in the 14 September 1897 issue of THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR, an article reported that C.W. Spencer, superintendent of the eastern division of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and his assistant, Thomas Hay, were 'admiring the clear, starlit heavens' from the observation car, near Gravel River, Ont., when they saw 'A something in the sky'.

They gave details of a large white light, and above it a red and a white light. When the air-borne object turned, the red light became blue and a row of four lights was seen terminated by a circle or ellipse of a dozen lights, in the midst of which was the dark body of the air ship'.

All the elements of other-world mystery were there, but the observers were not taken in by science fiction, then in its infancy in those days. The paper reported that the lights had the 'steady clearness of acetylene or electric light'. Spencer and Hay 'could form no other opinion than that it was an air ship'. The writer concluded: 'It is quite possible that some inventor has set to work quietly and unostentatiously and thus put his theories into practice in the world; and if he hasn't come to grief in the wilds of Lake Superior, we shall soon know that air navigation has been accomplished on Canadian Territory.' (WINGHAM ADVANCE-TIMES, Ontario, 27 July 1967)

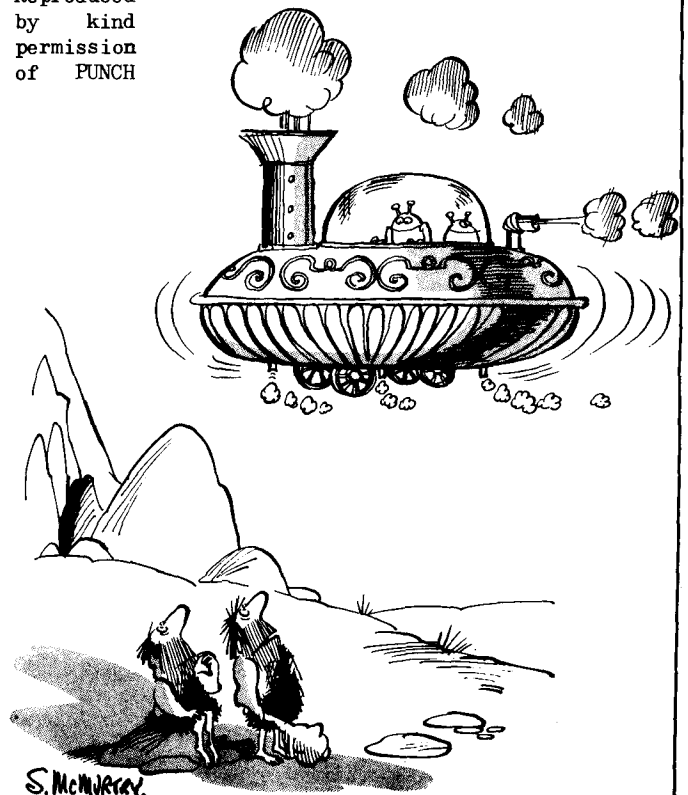
Source: SAUCERS, SPACE & SCIENCE, No. 49 - 17 Shetland Street, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada

Dr Doel comments: The first account fits in very well with my 'itinerary'; the airship was seen 15 miles north of Sioux City on 28 March 1897 by a gent who got the anchor mixed up with the seat of his pants. Mr R.H. Butler says he saw the machine on a Saturday evening/Sunday morning near Sioux City. This would allow ample time for the craft to arrive 100 miles away by next evening in Omaha, Nebraska, where it was seen by late worshippers leaving church (on 29 March).

Concerning the second account, as one of the probable origins of the airship was from the Pennington-Kane factory at Racine on the shores of Lake Michigan, it may well have had other sorties before being finally broken up. Ontario is directly north-east over the Great Lakes from Racine.....about 400 miles, and as we have seen from previous studies the airship could do this run in about 10 hours, the wind being favourable or at least calm. The conclusion of the reporter that 'some inventor has set to work' etc was a shrewd observation. Another point of significance is that he thought the ship might have come to grief 'in the wilds of Lake Superior'. Why Lake Superior if it was seen at Gravel River, Ontario? Presumably he saw it disappearing in the direction of that lake.... Again another shred of evidence in support of my thesis?

For further aspects of the 1897 sightings, read also 'The 1897 story' by Jerome Clark and Lucius Farish, published in three parts in FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, Vol.14 Nos. 5 & 6, and Vol.15 No.1. ●●

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S. McMurtry.  
"It's another of those flying saucer things."

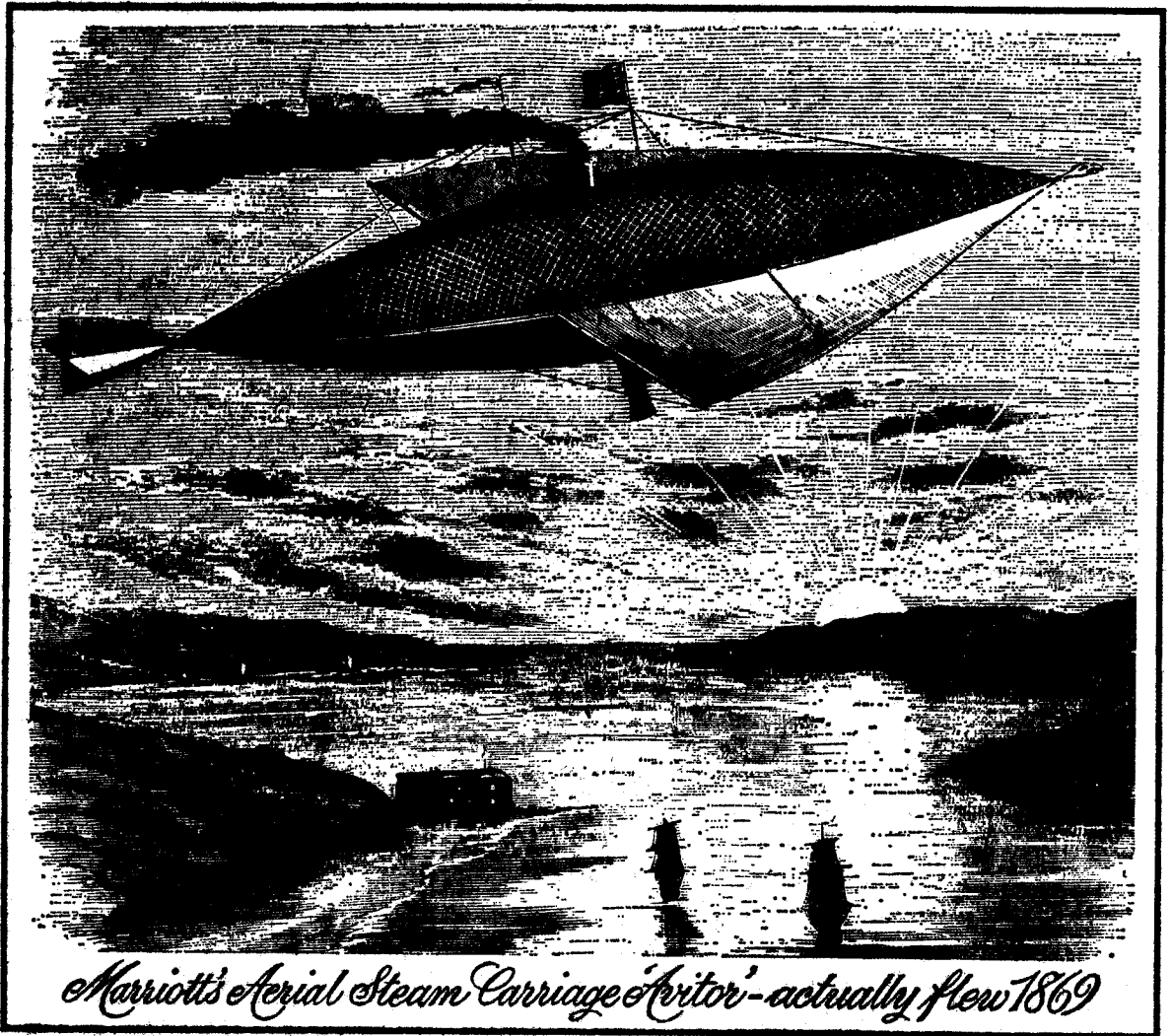
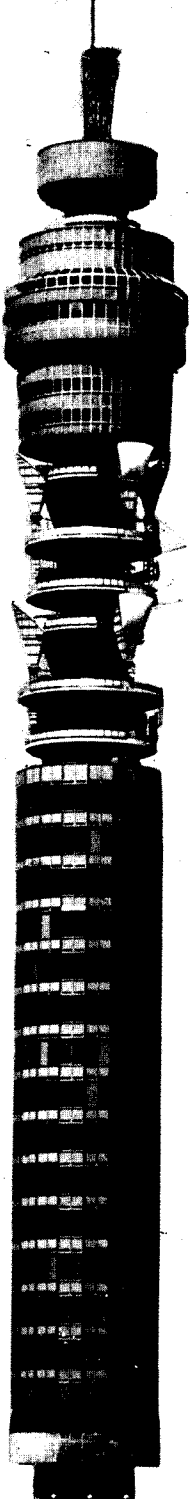
# SPACELINK

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# The 1897

See page 20

# CONTROVERSY



*Marriott's Aerial Steam Carriage 'Aritor' - actually flew 1869*

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attitude towards anything alien I think would give them cause.

Point 4, invasion, what would they hope to gain? Certainly not our superior knowledge, and most certainly not to find out how peacefully nations can live side by side. They could probably teach us all a well-deserved lesson.

Point 5, of course we must recognise their potential, since they are obviously far more advanced than we are. No doubt they could eliminate us if they so wished, but it would appear they intend us no harm, and neither will they contact us en masse until we stop our stupid wars, aggression, misuse of powerful weapons, etc. and learn to live in peace with one another. Just think what a lot we could learn from our extraterrestrial visitors. But will we? I doubt it.

Richard Thompson - 5 Western Avenue, Saxilby, Lincs

be confused with what I have seen described, unless there was a deliberate effort, or efforts, at a hoax.

Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, MA, FMA, FRSA - The Royal Aero Club, Pall Mall, London S.W.1.

(Ed: Charles Harvard Gibbs-Smith is an Honorary Companion of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and is regarded as a leading authority on aeronautical history. In 1970 Her Majesty's Stationery Office published his well illustrated, 356 page book entitled AVIATION, AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ITS ORIGINS TO THE END OF WORLD WAR II, which is based on a widely acclaimed earlier edition published in 1960. He is a director of F.S.R.)

### THE 1897 CONTROVERSY

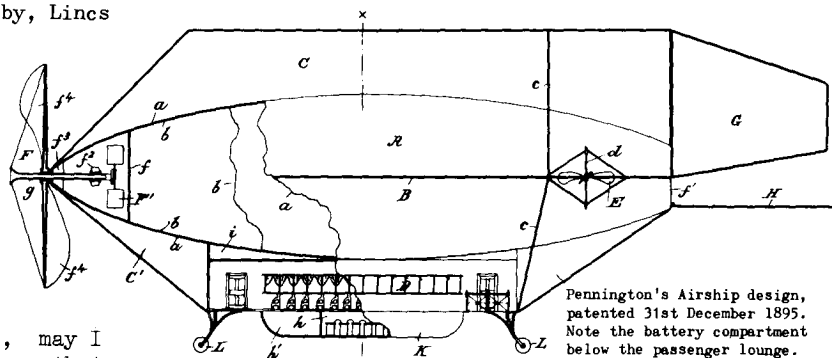
The following letter results from our item in the last issue of SPACELINK on the 1897 controversy, which itself followed an article entitled "The 1897 Flap Explained" by Dr. Geoffrey Doel in volume 5 number 4.

With regard to the 1897 controversy, may I say, once and for all, that whatever it was that was seen over the USA in that year, the object (or objects) was no kind of conventional or experimental balloon or airship made by man. One or two of the freak designs for airships in the 19th century were built, and one or two rose from the ground, such for example as Delamarne's creature: but they could not be propelled. It was not until 1884 that even the most sophisticated airship that Europe could build (Renard and Krebs LA FRANCE) could fly at some 12-14 mph; and nothing in the USA could proceed at anything like that pace, even for a mile or two. After 1884 there was a virtual lull in Europe, with a few dirigibles being tried out; but nothing that could get up a speed to make it fully independent of the wind. In America there was no dirigible of any kind that could possibly have travelled faster than the wind could blow it.

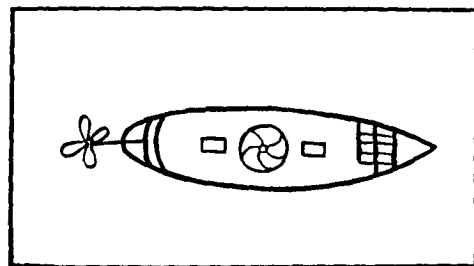
The next point is that all the talk of dirigibles that arose concerned airships of various shapes, and odd forms of propulsive units - often man-powered - whose ascensions were always in full daylight and accompanied by much ballyhoo and witnesses. The Pennington story can be ruled out completely, on propulsive power alone.

In all the accounts of the 1897 phenomena I have read, the UFO was always able to move away at speed. No manmade object ever did any such thing in the USA. It might have drifted away, but not sped away.

Finally, I cannot see how the 1897 phenomena could have been normal spherical balloons reported as airships. Balloons would be very well-known over much of the country, and no balloon could ever, by any stretch of the imagination



Pennington's Airship design, patented 31st December 1895. Note the battery compartment below the passenger lounge.



A newspaper reporter's sketch of an airship which passed over Nashville, Arkansas, late in April 1897.

#### DR. DOEL REPLIES TO CHARLES GIBBS-SMITH

Mr. Charles Gibbs-Smith's assertion that the object seen over the USA in 1897 "was no kind of conventional or experimental balloon or airship made by man" is simply a sweeping statement of opinion which is not supported by the facts which come to light when the evidence available is studied carefully. I cannot think that Mr. Gibbs-Smith has assimilated my article in detail otherwise some of the objections, raised in his letter, to the 1897 USA object being a manmade dirigible balloon would seem to have been answered.

His main objection appears to stem from the assumption that the propulsive power available at that time was not sufficient for a craft to perform even as modestly as that operated over America in 1897. America at that time being a nation of rapidly advancing technology undoubtedly would have been the equal of Europe in

S.L. APRIL 71

possessing power units suitable for experimental work on dirigibles. With the resources, wealth, inventiveness and drive of persons such as Pennington, advances surpassing those made in Europe in this field were very likely. There is no evidence that the 1897 airship attempted to fly against the wind, indeed the erratic itinerary suggests that it was operated with the wind in the manner of the balloon aeronauts of the time, so that speeds up to and beyond 40 mph were feasible.

The limitations of such a craft must have been only too clear to a man like Pennington who was nothing if not a capitalist, and that as a commercial venture it was a non-starter. 'Motor-cars' appeared to him to be a much better money-making proposition which would account for the quiet disappearance of his airship to await development at some later date. Before his death in 1911, Pennington is reported to have said that he intended to return to the building of airships.

Mr Gibbs-Smith refers to the speed of the 'UFO' on moving away, as reported by witnesses. Well, to a surprised observer who had never seen anything faster than the trains of that period, 40 mph or so would have seemed a remarkable velocity, particularly close to the ground. Freshly charged batteries plus the lift of the gas-filled envelope would have provided a very swift getaway when Pennington's craft took off. It is also possible that the lift / stabilising side-screws were compressed air driven, the evidence of witnesses rather suggests this.

In Europe, experimental craft of the airship type were not quite as primitive as Mr. Gibbs-Smith indicates around 1897. At that time, Count Zeppelin was building his first airship, and in 1884 Tissandier flew a dirigible which would seem rather similar to Pennington's. It was electrically propelled and could stem a wind of 7 mph. Flying with the wind, it could do very much better than this, and had a modest motor of 1.5 horsepower.

We know that Pennington evolved a large electrically driven model airship in 1891, and by employing a kerosene-electric system for battery charging, a far more powerful motor could have been installed.

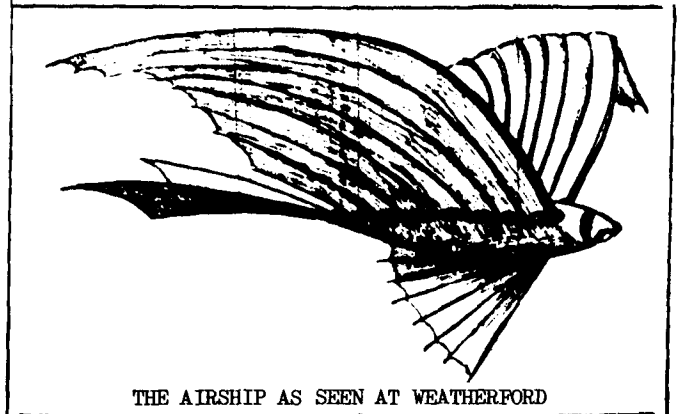
The development of the electric motor was rapid in the latter years of the last century, and at one time seemed likely to oust the petrol engine as a method of propulsion.

I have met with blank disbelief when I have stated that the world land speed record stood at 65 mph in 1898. It was achieved by Camille Jenatton in an electric car, the JAMAIS CONTENTE.

It may seem from my opinions regarding the 1897 USA 'airship' that in some way I am attempting to debunk UFOs in general. Far from it. It is also clear that some of the reports originating from the USA in the 1890s were due to 'genuine' UFOs and were associated with objects which resembled the now familiar 'flying saucer' and which behaved in a manner which has been reported from all over the world for many years. With great respect to Mr. Gibbs-Smith, I think it is clear that all the ingredients for a craft

such as the USA airship were in existence in 1897. It would have taken a Pennington to co-ordinate them successfully.

Geoffrey G. Doel, MRCS, LRCP, DMRE.  
Concord, Vaggs Lane, Hordle, Lympington, Hampshire



THE AIRSHIP AS SEEN AT WEATHERFORD

The above illustration comes from THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Friday 16th April 1897, and refers to a sighting of the airship at Weatherford, Texas on 14th April. The airship was also reported to have been seen at Cresson and Corsicana, Texas on the same night. The drawing with exaggerated artistic licence illustrates some of the reports, eg: "It is much the shape of a cigar. The main body appeared to be about 30 feet long. Great wing-shaped fans spread out on either side. At the front end was a large wheel much like the side wheels of a steamboat. At the rear end was a fan-like projection like the tail of a fish. The whole was about 75 ft. long." The ship was said to be electrically driven.

The third week of April 1897 saw a run of airship sightings reported in the DALLAS MORNING NEWS, and the headlines above the sketch said: "LOOKS LIKE A PASSENGER COACH" "Powerful Search Lights Fore and Aft-Has Monstrous Wings That Fan the Breezes" "Last night at 9 o'clock (at Weatherford) the airship that has been mentioned in The News from Oklahoma and other points, was seen here. It passed over the city in a southwesterly direction and lights were thrown out from the front resembling the headlight of a (railway) engine. The machine was seen by many people, The News correspondent included."

"Various and truthful citizens of Corsicana to-day declare that the airship, which has received not a little mention in the press this week, passed over the city last night. It was described by one, who is emphatic to the statement that he saw it as a bright light a long distance from the earth and was moving at rather a fast speed across the firmament. It was said to have been seen at about 8.30 o'clock, came from the north and was moving in a southerly direction when first noticed."

The airship sightings were very widely reported and it appears to have been the 'in thing' to have sighted it. Consequently the papers published quite a few obviously fictitious reports. Equally there were many sceptics, who not having seen the airship themselves, vehemently declared it a fake. Just as

then, so nowadays, we still have the professional debunkers. Although a few people declared the airship had come from Mars, most of the reports appear to be consistent with a man-made machine, and it appears to have been generally accepted as such. It should also be remembered that its daytime appearance when witnesses would have seen the full extent of its wings, gas envelope and rudder, would appear quite different from the night-time reports, when people would probably only see the searchlight and illuminated "passenger coach", which is clearly shown in Pennington's 1895 patented airship design.

#### A HOME MADE ONE

In addition to the literary hoaxers, there were also the practical hoaxers, which is well-illustrated in this story from THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS of 19 April. "A HOME-MADE ONE. Plano, Collin County, Texas, 18 April. The much talked of airship fell in Plano at 8.30 o'clock tonight and almost caused the destruction of Plano's large two-story public school building. It was first observed by Harris Wyatt coming from the southeast, and fell on the south gable of the school-house building. Some parties who saw the big light on the roof of the building alarmed the citizens by shooting off fire-arms and with the cry of "fire!" "The schoolhouse is on fire!" which brought out the whole town and emptied the churches of their congregations within a few minutes, but it all proved to be a dangerous hoax in the shape of a large "turkey buzzard" with a ball of cotton twine saturated with turpentine tied to one of the bird's legs. The bird had alighted on the roof of the school building and from a distance it looked as if the south end of the roof was on fire, which was viewed by hundreds of persons who were unable to do anything on account of the extreme height of the building. In a few minutes the ball of cotton burned itself loose from the bird's leg and rolled off the roof onto the ground, where the ball of cotton burned brightly for several minutes. The bird flew off the roof as soon as it was relieved of its warm burden. Plano has witnessed all the airships she wants to, and would prefer that they would pass some other way, if they all prove as dangerous as this one did to-night."

Ed: Thanks go to Ignacio Darnaude of Seville for so kindly supplying the newspaper material. ●●

#### UFOLOGY AND LIBRARIES

Thanks to SPACELINK (we say modestly) flying saucers now have their own subject heading. In BRAD - the "British Rate and Data", an important advertising directory, BUFORA JOURNAL, FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, INTERPLANETARY NEWS and SPACELINK can all be found under the heading "UFOLOGY". Because few libraries appear willing to put UFO books together under a common heading, our humble start could be used to influence librarians to change their ways. At present one searches through Astronomy, Astronautics, Flight, Meteorology, Psychology, Religion and you can probably think of a few other sections in order

to find your UFO books. This situation is downright unsatisfactory and the Dewey decimal system of book classification appears to be at fault. It allows UFOs/Flying Saucers to be placed under 001.9 which is intended for "Controversial and spurious knowledge". But few authors would admit or expect their manuscripts to fall into this category. Neither can one expect every librarian to be dispassionate about this; some books may be felt to fit this category while others may not. Hence the difficulty over classification using this coding.

Ref: DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION AND RELATIVE INDEX (1967) based on the system devised by Melvil Dewey.

000. is for Generalities  
001. is for Knowledge  
001.9 is for Controversial and Spurious Knowledge  
001.92 is for Controversies  
001.93 is for Curiosities  
001.94 is for Mysteries  
001.95 is for Deceptions and Hoaxes  
001.96 is for Errors, Delusions and Superstitions

The problem can be stated simply. The Dewey system which appeared in 1876 is now obsolete, but most public libraries persist in using it. A far better system, which is mainly restricted to academic and university libraries, is that advocated by the Library of Congress (most USA books include their L. of C. number). This is called the "Universal Decimal Classification" system, details of which are published by the British Standards Institution.

## APOLOGIES

The managing editor tenders sincere apologies for the long delay in bringing you this issue. Both he and the editor found it necessary to give more time to the pursuit of their work-a-day careers in different fields, which retarded researching and preparing material. Delays have also occurred through major mechanical faults in the electric typewriters used for the art-work, which itself takes a long time to prepare. Overseas readers may be unaware that there was a seven-week postal strike in the UK. Readers are thanked for their trust and patience, and reminded that they will still receive 4 issues for their subscription regardless of scheduling. A reappraisal of the schedule has had to be made and the aim is to publish SPACELINK twice a year, although with greater frequency if time and (voluntary) staff are available.

#### SUBSCRIPTION INCREASE

To meet rising costs, which are largely on postage including editorial correspondence, the four-issue subscription for volume 7 will be 75np - a rise of 7½np. This increase of just over 10% compares very favourably with the recent 20% increase in the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW's subscription rates.



→ 1.896-97



# AIRSHIPS OF THE 1890s

By Steven A. Arts (Nebraska, U.S.A.)

It is a long time since FSR published anything on the extraordinary UFO Wave over the United States in the years 1896-97. Long ago we devoted a lot of space to those events, but today there must be a great many folk among our newer or younger readers who may not even have heard about the curious phenomenon of the great "airships", carrying very powerful headlights or searchlights, which seem to have visited large regions of the United States in the last century. We shall therefore probably find an opportunity to carry a few recapitulations in the coming months. Meanwhile, two things seem to be quite certain about the UFO Wave of 1896/97 over the U.S.A. *Firstly, there does not appear to have been a single report anywhere in America of a craft of 'saucer' or 'disc' shape during those years (although there had been a notable one at Denison, Texas, in January 1875). And secondly, not a single one of the numerous reports from Americans who claimed to have seen the occupants of landed machines in 1896/97 referred to "small beings" or "big heads", although it is true that at least one account (on the Hamilton ranch at Leroy, Texas), referred to extremely unpleasant-looking creatures. Otherwise the encounter accounts — and there appear to have been quite a number of them — seem to describe very "normal" sorts of individuals resembling Americans in size and features. And every account of the craft seen seems to indicate something large and of the shape of an airship, or what we were later to call a dirigible or a "zeppelin". So, whatever and whoever it was that was examining the United States in 1896/97, it does not seem that they were anything like the small critters with big heads who are plaguing us at present.* EDITOR



\* \* \* \* \*

THE sightings started in the Sacramento (California) area, in November of 1896. One of the very first sightings, recorded in the newspaper *Sacramento Bee* of November 18, shows a difference. Voices are heard, but speaking English.

Titled "*Voices in the Sky*", the paper's account states: "Startled citizens last night living at points of the city along a rough diagonal line, yet far distant from each other, declare that they not only saw the phenomenon, but they also heard voices issuing from it in mid-air — not the whispering of angels, not the sepulchral mutterings of evil spirits, but the intelligible words and the merry laughter of humans.

"At those intervals where the glittering object, as if careless of its obligation to maintain a straightforward course, descended dangerously near the housetops, voices were heard in the sky saying:

*Lift her up, quick! You are making directly for that steeple.'*

"Then the light in the sky would be seen obeying some mystic touch and ascending to a considerable height (sic), from which it would take up again its southwesterly course."

The article goes on to give some other details, and refers to a man purported to be the inventor of just such an airship, and planning to fly it from New York to California.

Another section of the story relates the tale of one Charles Lusk, cashier of the Central Electrical Street Railway Company, who saw the airship. He, too, heard a voice saying:

*"Well, we ought to get to San Francisco by tomorrow noon."*

Carmen of the tram lines said they saw the airship, which was balloon-shaped. They considered it a balloon.

A Mr. G.C. Snyder, in the same article, claimed the airship was definitely not a meteor.

"I assure you," he is reported to have said, "there is no joke about this matter, so far as I am concerned. Last evening, about ten minutes before 7 o'clock, I saw a light, which was above, approximately, Twenty-seventh and P Streets, sailing in a southwesterly direction. It rose and fell and swayed from right to left as if it were being propelled by some motor power. It was a white light, and was not a star or a meteor, I am certain of that."

That south-westerly direction, mentioned twice, would, of course, take the airship in the general direction of San Francisco.

Two days later the *Sacramento Bee* copied an article published originally in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about the airship reports gaining popular attention in

that city.

Asked the *Chronicle* story:

"Are there up in the sky four jolly and intrepid human travellers, paying their last respects to Mars, singing quartets to Venus, and saluting the planets generally within hailing distance, or are the people of Sacramento affected with the disease known in polite society as "illuminated stagers".

"That is the question."

Was it, though? Observers of the modern UFO sightings will notice a somewhat nasty turn of events here. The story suggested that the Sacramento witnesses of the airship were drunk. A subtitle of the above article was: "Freemasonry of Liars, Suggests Prof. Davidson."

People who saw the mysterious lights in the sky were accused of drinking too much. Airships were thought to be kites, balloons, the planet Venus, the star Sirius, hoaxes, fakes, or, in another vein, ships from an advanced civilization on Mars.

The man who claimed they were from Mars said: "In my investigations of this subject, it would seem that this visitor is from our neighboring planet Mars. We know, from the evidence of scientists and astronomers, that Mars is millions of years older than the Earth."

Elsewhere in his impassioned letter to the *Sacramento Bee*, he says:

"The speed of our Martian ships is very great, and can be regulated to the rapidity of a thousand miles a second."

Real heady stuff, to say the least. What was this aerial phenomenon that had folk talking for nearly a year, from California to Maine?

It was what modern observers would call "unidentified flying objects", or "UFOs" for short. Back then they were called 'airships'. The above quoted letter was dated November 24, 1896!

'*Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*', dating back to about that period, defines airships as being "balloons".

These airships could not have possibly been balloons. What balloons, especially in the 1890s, could travel at an estimated 200 miles per hour, in one case that's on record?

There are similarities to modern UFO sightings, as one would expect, but there are many differences as well.

Another trend is visible in an article from the newspaper *Sacramento Union* of November 20th. They have started using nonsense humor, perhaps in an effort to downgrade the reports.

"The man who is alleged to have heard the chorus  
EGG? NO! 30K #3



while the machine was doing the 'Corbett duck', has put his remembering tank to work, and recalls that one line was *Just Tell Them That You Saw Me*, and now goes about mournfully whistling, *It Never Came Back*. Another who heard the music declares the words to have been, *Will You Miss Me When I've Gone?* and the refrain was, *I Gave That Man a Fill?*"

Two paragraphs further down they make a very half-hearted attempt to appease the people of Sacramento by saying:

"There are some of the stories floating about concerning the aerial mystery, and "there are others". Still the citizen pays his money and takes his choice, and, as this is a free country, has a right to his opinion. The lunacy commission is taking a vacation now, so the danger is reduced to a minimum. The question yesterday was not 'What is it?' but 'Have you seen it?'"

The *Sacramento Bee*, on November 19th, reported an investigation of the airships by a Grand Jury. On the same day, in another article, a subtitle declared: "All Men Liars? Looks That Way!"

Newspapers, it seemed, were beginning to take pro and con sides in the great airship debate. Yet it was not always easy to tell who was who.

To give you an idea of the controversy engendered by the airship issue, we quote here from six short reports from newspapers all over California and Nevada. From the *Sacramento Bee*, November 23rd:

"Our Citizens Are All Bright."

(From the *San Francisco Report*):

"Many of Sacramento's best citizens are said to believe they saw a real air ship Wednesday night and heard people in it talking. Never mind, Lady Somerset and Miss Willard are coming, and will of course visit Sacramento."

"What Kind Do You Mean?"

(From the *Fresno Republican*):

"Up in Sacramento some people claim to have seen a mysterious air ship coursing through the air against the wind. Spirits, boys, spirits!"

"No, The Same Old Brand."

"The *Bee* puts a dozen or more witnesses upon the reporter's stand to prove that an air ship passed directly over Sacramento this week. The reporter must have struck a brand which is stronger than his ordinary drink."

"The *Bee's* Assurance Goes."

(From the *Nevada Silver-State*):

"However, whatever it was, or whatever it pretends, it cannot be reasonably denied or doubted that the thing actually occurred as alleged by our frightened neighbors of Sacramento. For we have the assurance of the *Bee* that the whole population of the city was not drunk between 6 and 7 o'clock that evening."

"The Wicked Reporter Man."

(From the *San Jose News*):

"The story doubtless originated in the brain of some ingenious newspaper reporter in Sacramento, who has prepared the narrative with considerable care, going so far as to secure the co-operation of alleged witnesses, a comparatively easy matter, as there are many people who would "stand in" to support an improbable report yarn of that kind, considering it a huge joke."

And finally:

"Oh, Now, You Stop!"

(From the *Woodland Democrat*):

"A toy balloon was turned loose in Washington a night or two ago. It floated over Sacramento and the people were deluded with the idea that it was an air ship."

The reporter of the last dispatch got his facts

wrong. The supposed balloon was not a toy, and its alleged originating city was New York, not Washington. These articles were obviously written long before the age of litigation for libel against newspapers became popular.

The airship, or rather airships, moved east. There were various sightings in such states as Colorado, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa and South Dakota, west of the Mississippi River, during the spring and summer of 1897.

The population size of a state seemed to have no bearing on the number of sightings reported. Nebraska, with a population then of a mere 1,060,000, had dozens of reports.

One of the first reports in Nebraska came from the city of Hastings, when an airship, west of that town, was observed by several people floating 500 feet above the ground, for 30 minutes. That was from the fall of 1896.

When it reappeared in February 1897, it was 800 feet above the ground, and lights were seen on it. This mention of lights is reported on numerous occasions. It then descended 200 feet and "travelled at a most remarkable speed for about three miles. It then stood perfectly still for about five minutes and then descended for about 200 feet, circling as it travelled at a most remarkable speed for about two miles and then, slowing up, it circled for about fully 15 minutes, when it began to lower and disappear as mysteriously as it had made its appearance... A close watch is being kept for its reappearance."

A report from Hastings dated February 12, is a longer article, but has all the earmarks of the above one. The craft was reported to have been seen by a dozen people.

A report from the *Kearney Daily Hub*, of February 22, tells of a sighting there. Something of an editorial paragraph precedes the article itself.

"The *Hub* must admit that it has taken all air ship stories coming out of our sister towns with a grain of salt, and in one or two cases the dose of the saline accompaniment has been doubled. It doesn't believe in air ships, and the writer personally has never seen anything that resembled the much talked of 'light in the sky' more than one of the 'free' arc lights furnished in the past by the Kearney Electric company. Yet any belief should be held subject to revision when confronted by good and sufficient evidence. That evidence appears now to be on top."

They go on to report:

"If Mr. Prescott has seen an air ship he doesn't know it. In fact, if he was to see one he wouldn't be sure of it without it was labelled in large Gothic letters. But Wednesday evening, while walking home, between the hours of nine and ten o'clock, he saw a light in the west, a description of which strongly resembles the stories of the air ship that have come from other towns. The light appeared to be a great distance away, and its size looked to be about the same as the head of an ordinary wooden water bucket. It didn't move around to any great extent, but stayed out in the western atmosphere long enough to be seen distinctly. Whether it was an air ship, or one of the populistic signs of the times forecasting the selection of Sullivan as judge, has yet to be determined."

Besides politics, commercialism played a role in the reporting of the airship phenomenon, especially in Nebraska. The *Wilsonville Review* of April 9, 1897 reported that its editor had heard the craft's inhabitants yell "*Weiver Eht Rof Ebircsbus*". (It sounds like an alien version of Latin, but spells out "*Subscribe for the Review*", backwards.)

*The Wymorean*, published in Wymore, Nebraska,

(March 19) reported:

"That Air Ship Again.

"The air ship passed over this city last night at 15 minutes to 8. It came from the south and disappeared to the NW, moving at a rate of about 15 miles per hour against a strong wind from the east. As near as could be judged by those who saw it, it was about 2000 feet above ground. At times its motion was steady and at other times it would move up or down. Quite a crowd gathered on the street and watched the strange light for at least 10 minutes. Many of them have been skeptical heretofore, but now they are forced to admit that there is something in it."

Sightings ranged across Nebraska at least until May 1897 in such places as Omaha, Inavale, York Beatrics, Grand Island, Lexington, Odell, Peru, Central City, Table Rock, Norfolk, Fremont and others.

Among the many sightings in Kansas, one at LeRoy, on April 19, stands out. It occurred at 10.30 p.m. One Alexander Hamilton, owner of the farm in LeRoy, stated:

"I arose, thinking that perhaps my bulldog was performing his pranks, but upon going to the door saw to my utter astonishment that an air ship was slowly descending upon my cow lot, about forty rods from the house."

It was described as being three hundred feet long, cigar shaped, with a carriage beneath. Sounds much like a dirigible would be described.

Sightings also occurred at Topeka, Belleville, Atchison, Holson, Hiawatha, and Everett, Kansas.

There were sightings at Canton and Deadwood, South Dakota. But a report from the *Sioux Valley News* (S. Dakota) says of a report in Minnesota, dated April 16:

"The air ship has come and gone. It was the same air ship that has been seen floating above the Western states for the last three weeks. It is not a fake, but a genuine aeronautical conveyance. A square-shaped reddish light that looked half as large as the moon was seen by a number of persons from the Guaranty Loan restaurant windows at 9.25 o'clock last night. It was first seen in the direction of Hopkins, the crowd in the restaurant being congregated by J. J. Barrett, the St. Louis dispatch agent on the eleventh floor, whose attention was called to it by the operator at Hopkins, who saw it moving west. Jasper Gibbs, proprietor of the restaurant, saw the light first; it was then blazing red, but it gradually lost its redness, and suddenly again brightened again like a flash of light. It was moving in a diagonal line away from Minneapolis; and slowly commenced to sink over the horizon until 9.35, when it became invisible."

Next we move to Texas, where there were literally dozens of sightings. On April 17, 1897, one was spotted near the town of Aurora. This sighting will be quoted in whole, since it was different from its predecessors.

"About 6 o'clock this morning, the early risers of Aurora were astonished at the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing throughout the country.

"It was travelling due north and much nearer the earth than before. Evidently some of the machinery was out of order, for it was making a speed of only 10 or 12 miles an hour and gradually settling toward the earth.

"It sailed directly over the public square, and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water

"The pilot of the ship is supposed to have been the only person aboard, and while his remains are badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not an inhabitant of this world.

"Mr. T.J. Weems, the U.S. Signal Service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he (the pilot) was a native of the planet Mars.

"Papers found on his person — evidently the records of his travels — are written in some unknown hieroglyphics and cannot be deciphered.

"This ship was too badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power.

"It was built of an unknown metal, resembling somewhat a mixture of aluminium and silver and it must have weighed several tons.

"The town is full of people today who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon tomorrow."

The pilot's funeral? Subsequent investigation has offered no proof of the above crash, let alone burial. It has been termed a hoax.

Though definitely different from the bulk of reports from this era, it does not qualify as the first report of a crashed airship.

In Dundy County, Nebraska, in 1884, an airship supposedly crashed some 35 miles north-west of the town of Benklemen, on a ranch. A cowboy named Williamson had his face blistered by the intense heat. This story, from the *Holdrege Nugget* (Nebraska), has not been verified from other sources.

A report from Merkel, Texas of April 26, says:

"Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a large rope attached.

"They followed it until in crossing the railroad it caught on a rail. On looking up they saw what they supposed was the airship.

"It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several windows; one bright light in front like the headlight of a locomotive.

"After some 10 minutes, a man was seen descending the rope, he came near enough to be plainly seen, he wore a light blue sailor suit, was small in size.

"He stopped when he discovered parties at the anchor and cut the rope below him and sailed off in a north-east direction.

"The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliot & Miller and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people."

This report, and many others of that era, bring to mind the old television series "*Wild, Wild West*", where American spies thwart the plans of evil men in the old West, trying to take over the nation.

A report from Waterloo, Iowa and another from Burlington were purportedly hoaxes (April 10, 1897). Other sightings in Iowa were reported at Ottumwa, Des Moines, Belle Plaine, Fontanelle and others.

Then the sightings went into a wide number of states east of the Mississippi River.

One of the main ways in which the 1890s reports differed from modern ones was that these people, for the most part, considered the airships to be guided by human, earthbound agencies. There are, of course, a few exceptions, already cited. Among the supposed human inventors claimed to be hovering above American cities were: Hiram Maxim, Octave Chanute (an aviator), an unnamed associate of Thomas Edison, and many relative unknowns.

To give you an idea, here is a quote from the *Sioux Valley News*, South Dakota (May 14, 1897)

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"Sioux City, Iowa. May 11. P.E. Jewell of this place claims he has an air ship which actually flies. Thus far he has not entrusted his person to the tender mercies of his craft, but a ship of sufficient size to carry a man is now being constructed on the pattern of a successful model already tested. The model soared to a height of 100 feet and was then pulled in."

The report goes on to give details of this wondrous machine.

The similarities between the old and modern UFO sightings are remarkable. Detractors called the witnesses 'deluded', 'lunatics', or worse. Airships were 'Venus', 'balloons', 'kites', the usual standbys.

The author of this present article does not claim to know what those people saw 90 years ago. *One thing is certain, though. They did see something.* It may have been humans flying before it was officially recorded; pre-Spanish-American War fever; aliens; or the planet

Venus. No one will ever know.

NOTE BY EDITOR, FSR

Like pretty well everyone else no doubt, I have seen exhaustive pieces of research thoroughly debunking every one of these various cases. But somehow I don't feel able to accept that they were all faked by humans. And I note that, in his latest book DIMENSIONS, Dr. Jacques Vallée still accepts as genuine the case at the Hamilton Ranch at Leroy, Kansas, on April 19, 1897, and I think I am correct in saying that Dr. J. Allen Hynck was also inclined to accept it. (Though, as readers may recall, the version given above is not the full one. For the alien craft was actually reported to have lassoed and carried off a calf from one of Mr. Hamilton's paddocks. And *that rings a bell, doesn't it!*) All the same, great effort has gone into proving the Hamilton story to be a fake. And we can fully appreciate that in 1896 and 1897 many 'excellent folk' thought it fully justified to spread any sort of lie in order to prevent the truth from getting out. *After all, don't they still do precisely the same in 1989!*

MAIL BAG

The Claims of George Adamski

Dear Mr Creighton, — It continues to puzzle me that so many people still believe George Adamski; if they lived in his home town as I do, they would have ample opportunity to learn otherwise. At the least, Desmond Leslie and anyone else interested in the facts should have written to the various persons mentioned by Adamski before accepting his statements at face value. In any case I hope that the enclosed article will not be too controversial for FSR. (What am I saying? Nothing is too controversial for FSR!)

Yours sincerely,

Eric Herr,  
6250 1/2 Stanley Avenue,  
San Diego, CA 92115,  
U.S.A.

August 6, 1988.

Readers will find Mr Herr's article on page 15 of this issue. — EDITOR

Correspondents are asked to keep their letters short and give full name and address (not necessarily for publication). It is not always possible for the Editor to acknowledge every letter personally, and so he takes this opportunity to thank all who write to him.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh H. Trotti Jr,  
230 Wilton Drive,  
Decatur, Georgia 30030,  
U.S.A.

July 24, 1989.

(\*Modern *Tortosa*, on coast of N.E. Spain, south of Barcelona. ED.)

A bouquet for FSR!

— Please give my best regards to the Editor, Gordon Creighton, and to everybody working with FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.

We love you all. Great job!

Eugene Bauer,  
U.S.A.

March 8, 1989.

Two Small Beings

Dear Sir, — Having discovered the book "*Above Top Secret*", and then your publication, I feel that I must mention this experience of mine, just for the record.

It was February 1974, I was driving back home after taking my children to school. As I was approaching the house (I live in Kent) I saw two children on the pavement in front of my garden. I will never forget my first reaction and what followed. I wondered whose children they were, "skiving" from school. They looked about 7 or 8 years old. I did not recognize them as any of the local children. They wore identical dufflecoats and the hood was covering their faces. They were shuffling their feet playfully. The colour of their garments struck me by its intensity, and I remember wondering where I might buy such beautiful coats for my girls.

As a car came past them from the other direction, I saw them cross the metal bars, which form a feature of the front wall, as if nothing was there, and carry on with their playful movements.

I was still sitting in the car, and what I was seeing did not at first strike me as odd. Then I got out of the car, and went looking for them in the back garden, convinced that they must have gone to the back of the house, as they were nowhere at the front. They were nowhere at the back either. They had vanished into thin air and I knew it, although the need for rationality made me go looking for them in the back garden.

I then sat down and started recollecting my thoughts, and realized that what I had seen was not possible. I considered the many details I had noticed in a few seconds, and nothing made sense. Conflicting thoughts began to occupy my mind. I related my experience to my husband and to some friends, but their reaction was so completely negative that I never spoke of it again.\*

Yours faithfully,

Mrs — (Full name and address on file)

June 1989.

\*The lady is very wise. However, I have in my records a large number of similar cases, and those who have been reading FSR for years will recall several very striking ones that we have published. Of course the episode was "impossible". We all know that! *Lecturing on psychic phenomena to an audience of doctors and scientists, one of France's most famous pioneers in Parapsychology said: "Messieurs — I did not say that it was possible. I merely said that it happened!"*

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"Missing Persons" on Ships

Dear Mr Creighton, — In connection with the "*Mary-Celeste*" type of incident reported by Robert Perry Collins in his recent article *The Double Deception* (page 14 of FSR 34/2), I wonder how many of your readers remember their Suetonius?

In his chronicle of the Lives of the Caesars, this Roman historian (A.D. 70-160 approx.) gives the account of a ship from Alexandria which, approaching Dertosa,\* *was noted to have lost all its crew.* (See: Suetonius: *The Twelve Caesars*, Penguin Classics, p.253).

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## Charles Fort actually proves a Johnny-come-lately in historical perspective.

objects may have been, the descriptions derived from expectations of the day. Louis Winkler holds out for the airship being an actual invention on trial (*MUFON UFO Journal*, Mar. 1982), while Daniel Cohen's book, *The Great Airship Mystery* (1981), takes the opposite view that (all the sightings originate in conventional phenomena.) The longest study is Jean Sider's *L'Airship de 1897* (1987), a careful history based on extensive sources. Unlike Cohen, Sider recognizes the dynamic aspects of the wave and traces its spread throughout the country. He analyzes the descriptions along with the context of experimentation and fiction literature, then eliminates alternative explanations to conclude that a legitimate unknown accounts for some of the reports.

### EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS

England joined the airship business with waves in the spring of 1909 and winter of 1913, both discovered by Fort and explored in depth by recent researchers. In *FSR* (Nov. - Dec. 1970, Jan. - Feb. 1971), Carl Grove published his collection of 1909 reports. Paul Screeton followed one newspaper's coverage (*MUFOB*, Summer 1980). David Clarke, Granville Oldroyd and Nigel Watson have just completed a massive catalogue of 1913 newspaper reports for the Fund for UFO Research. These two waves intertwine so closely with fears of German invasion that they have provided ammunition for an interpretation of airships as a form of social panic (Roger Sandell, Peter Rogerson, *MUFOB*, Autumn 1978; Watson, *Magonia*, Spring 1980). Hints that the Russians also shared in the 1913 wave have appeared in *FSR* (Mar. 1984, Feb. 1987).

Scandinavia has been another busy area for UFOs, with "balloon" reports from 1897, phantom airships in 1909, and phantom airplanes during World War I. Then the action really began: An article by David G. Markham in *Doubt* (Jan. 1942) dealt with "ghost

fliers" over Sweden, and John Keel reported in depth on these 1933 - 37 sightings in *FSR* (May - June, July - Aug. 1970; July - Aug., Sept. - Oct. 1971). The "ghost rockets" appeared in 1946 and again received mention in *Doubt* (#16, 17). A survey by Bjorn Overbye was published in *FSR* (May - June, July - Aug. 1970), and Loren Gross devoted a booklet, *The Mystery of the Ghost Rockets* (1974, 2nd. ed. 1982), to these reports. Swedish investigators have obtained access to extensive Swedish government files concerning these sightings and are also collecting newspaper reports and interviewing witnesses, so the "ghost" waves promise to be the best-researched of all historical UFO events. Some results have been published by Anders Liljegren (*FSR*, Dec. 1986; nearly every issue of the *AFU Newsletter* [Box 11027, S-600, 11 Norrkoping, Sweden] also contains an article on this work). In 1987 Erland Sundqvist published *Spokflygarna - 46*, a book devoted mostly to the ghost rockets. The best summary of Swedish research is "The Ghost Rockets," by Liljegren and Clas Svahn, in *UFOs 1947 - 1987*.

### OTHER WAVES

A summary and bibliography of other waves can be found in Nigel Watson's booklet, *Phantom Aerial Waves and Flaps* (1987), an essential survey of UFO concentrations over the past century and a half. Historical reports not associated with a wave are scattered and difficult to find. Of course Fort's books are major sources, as are the pages of *Doubt* and Carl Pabst's ongoing "Notes of Charles Fort" column in each issue of *Pursuit*. The sourcebooks compiled by William Corliss from old scientific publications carry on Fort's work in a more systematic way, and often provide full texts of reports. Louis Winkler's *Catalogue of UFO-Like Data Before 1947* (Fund for UFO Research, 1984) contains a valuable list of reports as well. Lore and Deneault's *Mysteries in the Skies* and Loren Gross's *Charles Fort, the For-*

*tean Society and UFOs* cover the period from the 1896 wave to 1947 by revealing many unfamiliar reports. The series by Clark and Farish in *UFO Report* also includes some "strays," especially the article on UFOs from the 1920s.

Perhaps the most thorough survey of all is Michel Bouquard's *La Chronique des OVNI* (1977), which culls reports for the period 1800-1947 from many UFO publications and lists summaries in chronological order. A survey of historical New Zealand reports by Harold J. Knapman and a similar survey for Australia by Bill Chalker appeared in *UFO Research Australia Newsletter* (Nov. - Dec. 1983). George M. Eberhart's *Geobibliography of Anomalies* includes a great many historical reports from the U.S. and Canada, while from England, David Clarke and Granville Oldroyd concentrate on a particular kind of phenomenon often reported early in the century in their booklet, *Spooklights: A British Survey* (1985).

The UFO literature contains many other old reports, but the reader must look far and wide for these individual cases, some of them accidental discoveries and some the reminiscences of witnesses speaking out after decades. A few examples include Jerome Clark's discussion of a supposed 1884 airship crash in Nebraska (*IUR* Nov. - Dec. 1986), Dwight Whalen's discovery of a mystery airplane over Ontario in 1911 (*Fate* Dec. 1982), and the reprint of a newsclipping about an 1889 airship over Paris, Texas (*Crux* Summer 1985). Madge Brosius Allyn kept secret her observation of a flying "cucumber" in 1903 for 68 years (*Fate* March 1971), Paul T. Collins recalled the 1942 "Battle of Los Angeles" UFO (*Fate* July 1987), while William D. Leet and Leonard H. Stringfield reported their "foo fighter" sightings from World War II (*MUFON UFO Journal* Jan. - Feb. 1979; *Inside Saucer Post ... 3-0 Blue* [1957]).

### PRE-1800

Treatments of aerial phenomena before 1800 are even more hapha-

zard; and often left to the discredited "ancient astronauts" school. Yet the peoples of ancient and Medieval times saw strange sights in the sky, and the Reformation period was a golden age for aerial wonders. Donald H. Menzel draws on original sources for reports included in *Flying Saucers* (1953) and *The UFO Enigma* (1977), as does Jacques Vallee in *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* (1965) and *Passport to Magonia* (1969). Historical reports from all ages are plentiful in *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (1954) by H.T. Wilkins, and W. Raymond Drake bases a whole series of books on historical records. Again instances turn up throughout the literature, for instance Chinese reports (FSR June

1985) or 18th century sightings in the Clark and Farish series. George M. Eberhart includes an extensive bibliography of pre-1800 UFOs in his *UFOs and the Extraterrestrial Contact Movement* (1986). A concise summary of UFOs in these eras appears in Michel Bougard's article in *UFOs: 1947 - 1987*.

Charles Fort actually proves a Johnny-come-lately in historical perspective. A Roman author, Julius Obsequens, gathered reports of "prodigies" from Roman historians, most notably Livy, and these reports include the aerial objects and falls of substances such as blood which we now identify with Fort (the surviving fragments of Obsequens are included and

translated in v. 14 of Loeb Classical Library set of Livy's works). In the 16th century a French author, Simon Goulart, collected similar strange events, and his interest in UFOs is treated in *Les Soleils de Simon Goulart* (1981), by I.L. Olivier and Jean-Francois Boedec. Another 16th century author qualifies as the most ambitious collector of all: This was Conrad Lycosthenes, who scoured numerous sources to compile a collection of every strange event reported from the creation of the world to his own time. His *Prodigiorum ac Ostentorum Chronicon* (1557) is a huge listing of mainly aerial phenomena. An English translation entitled The Conrad Chronicle is forthcoming this year from the Dahlin Family Press.

## Linguistics Expert Vouches For MJ-12 Briefing Paper

By Robert H. Bletchman, J.D.

**Attorney Bletchman is MUFON State Director for Connecticut.**

After viewing the Ted Koppel ABC-TV "Night Line" program on June 24, 1987, in which Bill Moore debated the validity of the MJ-12 documents with Philip J. Klass, I was intrigued as to how the briefing papers might be authenticated. Since Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter (MJ-1) was listed as the briefing officer on the report for President-Elect Dwight D. Eisenhower, dated 18 November 1952, and was listed first, I proposed to Bill Moore that Hillenkoetter most likely authored the memo. Consequently, it was felt that the authenticity of the author could be tested by a comparison of the writing style between known writings of Admiral Hillenkoetter and the briefing memo.

Dr. Roger W. Wescott, Professor of Linguistics at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, and a reknowned linguist, was contacted and his expertise solicited to make such an analysis and evaluation. Dr. Wescott advised that he would approach the problem

through stylistics, a discipline of linguistics, which deals with the more-or-less unique design or syntax of everyone's written language. Twenty-seven (27) letters and memos written when Admiral Hillenkoetter headed up the C.I.A. were provided to Dr. Wescott along with the briefing memo.

The following constitute quotations made by Dr. Wescott in his letter of April 3, 1988 to me. "Admiral Hillenkoetter's epistolary style resembles that of most bureaucrats, very blandly conventional and lacking the eccentricities of diction which make the writings of some individuals so distinctive (and consequently so hard to counterfeit). While it is true that some of his memoranda contain errors of spelling and punctuation, these are rare and do not recur often enough to constitute stylistic markers.

"On the other hand, I did find time today to re-read all 27 of the Hillenkoetter communications that you have sent me since August, 1987 and to order them chronologically. They seem to fall rather clearly into three groups: those written before 1947 and 1950,

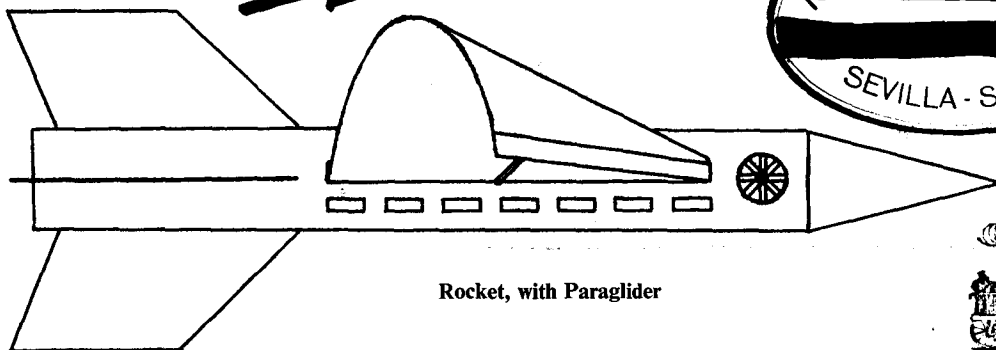
which don't concern unidentified flying objects (hereafter UFOs); those written between 1952 and 1961, which express an urgent interest in obtaining more information about UFOs and preventing military 'cover-ups' of the subject; and those written between 1962 and 1970, which adopt a non-committal stance, maintaining interest but exhibiting scepticism about the extra-terrestrial hypothesis (hereafter ETH).

"The crucial time-period here is obviously the fall of 1961, when Hillenkoetter apparently withdrew from participation in the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). Philip Klass and other critics of MUFON predictably treat both the presidential briefing memo of November 18, 1952, and the congressional letter of August 22, 1961, as forgeries. But the stylistic evidence that he cites seems to me to be quite inconclusive: I myself, for example, alternate between writing 'April 3, 1988' and '3 April 1988' in my own letters.

"In ambiguous situations like this, I  
MUFON UFO JOURNAL, No. 243, July 1988

FSR, N<sup>o</sup> 6, 1967

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## 19th CENTURY PARAGLIDER?

by W. H. Watson

Our contributor, who lives in South Australia, makes an interesting suggestion that seems to underline the idea that the Ufonants are generally a few decades ahead of us with their devices.

WHILST perusing recent articles on the mystery airships over the United States between 1880 and 1897, a particular peculiarity of the descriptions struck me repeatedly as being exceedingly odd and yet strangely familiar.

Apart from the fore-and-aft mounted propellers, one reads again and again of sails, great wings, or occasionally large fins. Some reports mention light wings, triangular in shape. "Fragile construction" seems to be a prominent feature, most notably in an April 9, 1897, report from Illinois, mentioned by Jerome Clark.<sup>1</sup> The same report adds that "a short distance above the body, lateral structures resembling wings or sails" were noted.

We hear from Donald B. Hanlon<sup>2</sup> of one over Iowa three days later, on which "the vibration of the wings could be plainly seen."

Reading of sails in connection with airships recalled to mind medieval legends of "sky people" or "celestial sailors" cavorting around the firmament in airboats or "cloud ships," closely related in appearance to the sailing vessels of their day.

Like others before me I assumed that each generation was interpreting what it had seen in terms of what was familiar to it.

But there was an obvious anomaly. Who in the nineteenth century would have visualised flexible sails above an airship? And triangular wings were, if anything, even less feasible inventions at that time.

Something niggled at the back of my mind, and remained niggling for some six months.

Then the February, 1967, copy of the British Interplanetary Society's magazine *Spaceflight* arrived, and there it was on page 50—*A New Recovery System for Sounding Rockets* by W. Pittelkow, of Dornier-System GmbH, West Germany . . . the Paraglider.

To find a concise explanation of the paraglider I turned to the March, 1964, edition, page 54,

wherein G. Scheffler stated: "Two lifting-surfaces constructed on the paraglider principle are covered with a metallic silk material. They can be easily folded together and stowed in the centre of the rocket. When the rocket nears the Earth on the return leg of the trajectory, a command from a ground station via a compressed air mechanism releases the flexible wings from their compartments. The thin leading-edge booms hinge outwards and between them and the rocket body conical half-cups are formed."

The wing dihedral is 30°, angle of sweepback 56°. The experimental rocket has four conventional elevator-rudder fins at the tail, and the paraglider wing-tips are attached to the body by extending booms beneath the wing fabric.

America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration is also testing a similar device for landing the *Gemini* capsule.

Recalling Captain James Hooton's description<sup>3</sup> we read of "condensed air and aeroplanes" . . . "The aeroplanes suddenly sprang forward, turning their sharp ends skyward, then the rudders at the end of the ship began to veer to one side . . ."

Coincidental descriptions—paragliders operating in a reverse manner to that intended by Dornier-System, or am I too interpreting the mystery in terms of what is familiar to our generation?

**Postscript:** In addition to the mystery airship sightings, the paraglider reminds me of the weird objects observed by Vauriat, France, on August 29, 1962 (FLYING SAUCER REVIEW July-August 1963).

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Clark, J. *The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship*, FSR July/August 1966
- <sup>2</sup> Hanlon, D. B. *Texas Odyssey of 1897*, FSR September/October 1966. Also, in collaboration with Vallée, J., *Airships over Texas*, FSR, January/February 1967.
- <sup>3</sup> Captain Hooton left a sketch of the airship he claimed to have encountered, and this Heath-Robinson looking object will be found adorning the cover of the July/August 1966 issue of the REVIEW.

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that achieved by Cape Kennedy type rockets. Yet men are specially trussed up and positioned for flights in the latter. No particular care seems to have been taken with our Austrian.

3. Finally, although armed with maps, compasses, directional radio beams and so on, aircraft found it extremely difficult to 'home' on a target at night during the last war. How then did The Thing bring his charge back at terrific speed to the exact spot from which they had taken off?

4. There is a dream-like quality in the way they pull up "without a jerk" and in the way they seem to float in and out of the ship. Against this the Austrian "felt the heat of the sun". One doesn't usually feel things in dreams.

5. In spite of these objections, I do not necessarily disbelieve this story.

B. More on 1897

1. One makes certain reservations, it would appear that what was seen in 1897 was an airship. Consider its speed, its method of propulsion. The fact that the 'old gentleman' had "plenty of money", "experimented" and spoke perfect American—there is no comment on his accent!

2. The reservations would be:

(a) That, ordinarily speaking, a balloon suspends the law of gravitation. In fact it only counteracts it. But this is how we often speak.

(b) "I will attempt to visit the planet Mars. . . ." This could be a gentle leg pull. After all the man on the ground can't do much about it. And the 'old gentleman' would be tempted to exaggerate his good fortune!

3. If the latter really could lift a 4-ton Hotchkiss and ten tons of ammunition by placing a small wire around each object or group of objects, then why build an airship at all? The whole lot could be loaded on a platform, with wire under it: a sort of magic carpet.

4. It seems to me that the very reasonable sketch of the ship passing over Nashville is a view of its underside. Under the nose we see, probably, ailerons, the two oblongs are doubtless nacelles and part of the propeller shaft must be hidden behind an outer envelope. The machinery may well be in the rear nacelle.

5. There were military dirigibles before the First World War and I feel that 1897 is so close to this that it is more probable than not that this is a rather early and advanced type.

S. A. Paris, Brooklands, Upholland, Wigan, Lancs.

[Perhaps Mr. Paris will refer to the July/August issue of the REVIEW. Following Mr. Jerome Clark's article, The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship, he will find a note by Mr. Charles Gibbs-Smith, the eminent

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The Editor and Publisher  
a very Happy Christmas  
take this opportunity of

aviation historian. Mr. Gibbs-Smith states quite definitely that "No form of dirigible (i.e. gasbag propelled by an airscrew) or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying—or indeed could fly—at this time in America".  
—EDITOR.]

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If the UFO be only an because we kn tic subjects. I so far there i shown pre-ex is the case, th be a stress a included in a "transient si discussing th characteristic:

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These disc theory of stre havioural rea adaptive res temporarily a persons, with be expected when the situ of symptom heard statem

As a psych kind of stres duce a "UFO

stimulus is represented by the presence of the ) itself; that is, of a physical object or pheno- on with characteristics strange enough to deter- : a stressful situation. So we come back to the ing point, having to admit the presence of a ical object starting the situational stress. Besides, : transient personality disorders we are discus- are to be expected *only* in situations of a catas- tic nature—e.g., fire, earthquake, war-time bat, severe illness, grief following death of a d one—such as would overwhelm the adaptive cities of almost all individuals.

do not think the sighting of a UFO in the sky ressful enough. Of course, if you see a UFO very close to you and you know (or you think know) that you are sighting an extraterrestrial hine, or if you see the "occupants" coming out, you are put into a stressful situation of the discussed above. And you can even show the of reaction we have observed in the so-called tact-cases", or the neurotic reactions we have in other people. But here again we have to it the presence of an unfamiliar physical pheno- on, object, or machine, starting the situational is.

n the other side, if we admit we may not be able identify the stressful situation capable of inducing UFO hallucination", but that such a situation ts in every UFO case and *is not* produced by sighting of an unfamiliar physical object—then might classify the UFO phenomenon into the gory of a subjective phenomenon with the four acteristics listed above. Incidentally, item 4 ws that the characters of the witnesses are not mportant because their past stories will show no lence of pre-existing personality disturbances.

Until now we are discussing the individual case. ve study UFO sightings witnessed by groups of ions, then the problem takes a different aspect. chiatrists have proved by observations and experi- ts that different persons react differently to the ie stressful situation. In other words, it is *possible* to obtain the same hallucination in dif- it persons submitted to the same stressful situa-

Their "breaking point" is never the same, and quality and intensity of their reactions will be pletely different from each other. The exception e particular case of a "mystic experience", where up of people is already conditioned and pre- beforehand to experience the same kind of ion—through a mechanism of self-suggestion elf-hypnosis. This is not the case when a group ople unexpectedly witnesses the sighting of a The conclusion is that the "individual UFO

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THE AMERICAN UFO WAVE OF 1.896-97

TRANSCRIPTION FROM "THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS" DALLAS, USA

MONDAY APRIL 19th, 1.897, PAGE 5:

1  
IGNACIO DARNAUDE  
SEVILLA - SPAIN

"THE GREAT AERIAL WANDERER:" IT IS EITHER A REALITY OR ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA WERE (MARE) (illegible on the original) AMATEURS. EFFECT OF CHAMBERS GREEK WATER. FOUND ON THE GROUND AT GREENVILLE AND STEPHENVILLE AND EXPLODED AT DECATUR".

"Stephenville, Tex., April 17.- This afternoon Mr. C.L.Mollhany, a prominent farmer who lives three miles down the Bosque from here, came into "The News" correspondent's office and before seating himself he said:

"I have found it".

"Found what?"

"Found the airship "The Dallas News" has been talking about. It is no joke. I discovered the ship on the ground early this morning. It was in charge of two men, one an engineer and the other a pilot. They had been compelled to come to the ground to make some repairs on the machinery. At one came to Stephenville and reported my find."

"I got a large number of our citizens, who at once proceeded to the spot to view the aerial monster. Among those who viewed the wonderful machine were: Col. James U. Vincent, Eugene Moore of the Stephenville Empire, Mr. Charles Bassell of the Stephenville Journal, Judge W.W. Moores, Senator L.N. Frank, Mr. M.F. Martin, Dr. S.D. Naylor, Judge Thomas B. King, Mr. J.C. George, Dr. M. Day, J.H. Cage, S. Frank, W.P. Orr, mayor of the city, James Collins, Mr. Lee Young, Dr. R.B. Cameron, Dr. J.H. Stewart, A.M. Borders, S.C. Buck, Hon. J.T. Danfel, ex-district attorney Hon. J.W. Parker, district attorney Otho S. Houston and Hon. J.S. Straughan, district judge, and many other of our prominent citizens. The airship is very much as reported by "The News" heretofore."

It consist of a cigar-shaped machine with two immense aeroplanes, and the motive power is an immense wheel at each end, in appearance much like a metallic wind-mill. It is driven by an immense electric engine, which derives its power from storage batteries. The crew consisted, as stated, of two men, who gave their names as S.E. Tilman and A.E. Dolbear. They report that they have been making an experimental trip to comply with a contract with certain capitalists of New York, who are backing them. They are confident that they have achieved a great success and that in a short time the navigation of the air will be an assured fact. They refused to have their machine critically inspected and refused to talk further as to their plans for the future. They rapidly made the necessary repairs, boarded the ship and, adding adieu to the astonished crowd assembled, the ship rose gently into the air and sailed off in a southwesterly direction. "If you don't believe me, just ask any one of these men who saw it. And say, I want you to tell "The News" about it. This is one time old Earth is ahead - the first place the airship has been seen to light. And say, what you reckon is going to happen when dynamiter get to riding in airships and dropping bombs down on folks and cities?. Is this world ready for airships? Without an answer Mr. Mollhany went forth to tell the news."

"A JUDGE SEES IT. THE CURIOUS EFFECT OF CHAMBERS CREEK WATER"

"Waxahachie, Ellis Co., Tex. , April 18.- "The News" reporter has had an interview with Judge Love of this city concerning the mysterious airship, which has been puzzling the minds of many Texans. A rumor having gained currency that it had been seen by him. "The News" reporter called at his office in quest of further information. Judge Love said:"  
"Mr. Beatty and myself were on a fishing tour on Chambers Creek near the mouth of Great House branch yesterday. The wind was in the north and we were having very little success. About 5:30 or 6 o'clock in the afternoon we decided to go further down the creek about 600 yards from the mouth of Great House branch Mr. Beatty was slightly in advance, and I heard him say, "My God, what is that?". When I struggled, through the underbrush to him he pointed to the left and there, in a ravine, was a group of five peculiarly

Dressed men, and resting on the bank by them was a queer looking machine, which from the sketches and description heretofore published in "The News" we decided must be the airship. The men were taking their case-stretched out full length on some furs- and they were smoking pipes. We, with some trepidation, advanced upon them: when they saw us they appeared somewhat disconcerted, but one of them in fairly good English called to us, "Come on and join us". We advanced and after mutual introductions had taken place, I asked if that was the famous airship. The man who had first called to us, and who appeared to be the leader of the party, said, "That is one of the airships ; would you like to examine it?". The vessel or airship is thirty-two feet long and in the <sup>2</sup> center is fourteen feet wide, sloping gradually toward each end like a Mexican cigar. It has three pairs of wings, each is like the wings of a bird. They are ribbed fore and aft. and are covered, so that the stream of air can have its full lifting capacity somewhat after the manner of the wings of the kits sent up by Lamson in Rigby park. The airship contained machinery by which the wings can be worked or flapped very rapidly and by means of a lever the ship can be turned in any direction or made to ascend or descend at the will of the helmsman. The ship is fitted for the accommodation of its crew, containing bunks, cooking department, gasoline stove and other conveniences. We were told by the aerial navigators that the airship was capable of a speed of 250 miles an hour, but that its normal rate of speed was from 125 to 150 miles an hour. On evincing desire to hear whence they came and how long they had been navigating the air, their leader produced pipes and a sack of excellent tobacco and asked us to make ourselves comfortable while he proceeded to enlighten us.

"We, he said, live in the regions of the north pole. Contrary to the general belief, there is a large body of land beyond the polar seas, containing about 250 square miles of territory. The first time this land was visited by human beings, so far as we know, was when the ten tribes of Israel found their way there after the captivity and dispersion of the Jews. According to tradition they were attempting to cross Bering straits and were carried by a floating iceberg and landed on the shores of north pole land. The climate there, while at that time cold, was prevented from being uninhabitable by the influence of the gulf stream, which, after flowing for hundreds of miles many fathoms under the surface of the sea in that region, came to the surface and flows entirely

Well, the polar expedition of Sir Hugh Willoughby in 1,543, who, with his crew, was supposed to have been lost, as a matter of fact succeeded in reaching north pole land. The ship had been so wrecked and broken up by the voyage that Sir Willoughby and his crew were unwilling to risk a return trip, therefore they remained at north pole land. In the early part of 1,546 Sir John Franklin's crew reached north pole land. Sir John having died near what is now called Lady Franklin bay. Sir John's crew remained, as to return was impossible, the ship being crushed between two icebergs 100 miles from north pole land, to which they went in boats. In addition to the foregoing, various parties in the United States and Europe have from time to time reached this land in a (....) (one illegible word) condition".

"How do you manage to live?"

"Well, we have a splendid country now. You know how (....) (one i. word) are heated by steam?."

"Well, we have (....) through water steam to convey it all over the inhabitable part of the country and the (....) at such a temperature that we can produce all the (....)....the country is lighted....(4 illegible lines of text).

The oxygen burns very rapidly, giving out great heat. Now, by means of the chemical process, we take an iceberg, separate the hydrogen from the oxygen and use the latter for fuel and lights. For lack of timber we can not build ships or trains, therefore we were led to the invention of the airships. We have been using the airships in north pole land for many years for local travel, but not until recently have we made the experiment of taking such trips as the one we are now on".

"On the 1st day of January the Historical society of north pole land decided to send out a number of airships throughout the United States and Europe. Twenty airships were ordered built expressly for the purpose with a capacity of five men each. On the 1st day of March, 1897, ten of these ships were started to Europe and ten to America. There are ten airships in the United States. We have guns and fishing tackle and the speed which we go enables us to take any game we can sight. By agreement the ten airships in the United States will meet in Nashville, Tenn., to attend the Centennial Exposition on June 18 and 19 and the ships will be on exhibition for those two days free of charge."

"About 100 miles north of here we had to descend and saw one of your trains go by. They are very curious things, but go so slow. Now we must be going".

Judge Love continued:

"We then shook hands with the crew and they stepped into their ship, rose in the air and started toward Waco. The description of the ship I have given you is a very meager one, but you can all go to the Nashville Exposition June 18 and 19 and see for yourselves".

"HAS A MUSICAL CREW" ("The Dallas Morning News", April 19th 1897)

3

Hillsboro, Hill Co., Tex., April 18.- A number of persons in this city whose curiosity in regard to the airship has been aroused to fever heat by the graphic accounts of this mysterious wanderer of the heavens as published in "The Dallas News" sat up most of last night in hopes of seeing it. Their vigilance was not rewarded, probably from the fact that it had engagements to fill in other sections and could not get around.

However, a gentleman named Walter Williams, who camped with his wagon on a high hill about two miles east of here on the Hillsboro and Mount Calm road, and who slept on the extreme summit of the hill, says he heard and saw wonderful things that were not on the programme. He came to town this morning and "The News" reporter ran across him at the city watering trough as he was watering his team. The reporter observing that he appeared perplexed about something, halted and entered into a conversation with him, and soon learned the cause of his perplexity. An account of this man and his strange experience is best related in his own words. Said he: "My name is Walter Williams. I am a farmer and live in Anderson county near Mentalba, a small country village. I am on my way overland to Hardeman county, where I have land interests. Last night I stayed two miles east of here on a high hill.

I stepped my wagon and team at the foot of the hill, where I fed my team. After supper I strolled about a little for relaxation and eventually got to the summit of the hill. The night was an ideal one, with no clouds visible anywhere. The moon was cleverly up and the view from the hill was eminently beautiful and impressive. The city of Hillsboro lay off in the valley to the west in all its picturesqueness, while beyond it the shadow of the cross timbers showed darkly against the horizon. The timbered creek above and below me and the clear sky above, from which a few stars blinked sleepily added to the happiness of the occasion. Moved by an impulse, I took

ON MY MAT IN ACCORDANCE TO THE MANNERS THAT HAD FASHIONED THE HILLS AND SPREAD THE valley there. The place was so lonely and quiet I decided to spend the night there, and get my blankets and spread them on the ground, with nothing but the blue canopy above me.

I soon drifted away into the land of slumber. After a while I was awakened by the sound of music. I lay on my pallet with my eyes closed and listened to it. Softer, sweeter, weirder music was never heard. Its melody coursed through my veins and penetrated my very soul. Presently I was sufficiently awake to remember where I was, and it struck me as very strange that I should hear music at that place and time. I opened my eyes and looked around me. I could see no one and the music very strangely seemed to be in the air overhead. I sprang to my feet and peered into the air with all my might, but could not see anything. It must have been midnight or past, for the moon had climbed high up the heavens, and its silver rays filled the earth with their radiance. I felt as if I was in a spirit land listening to the weird music of spirits. It was like the music of an organ with flageolet, violin, flute and cornet accompanying. At times it seemed very near and then floated far away almost beyond the range of hearing, but always returning sweeter and more devotional than before. Look as I would, I could see nothing of the invisible musicians, and it is natural that I should have felt somewhat superstitious about it. Yet I was not as disturbed as one would suppose by it. I knew or felt reasonably certain that no human agency produced the music, still it did not terrify me. The tune was "Coronation", and while it was soft and low, it seemed to penetrate the entire universe. The very air seemed to thrill from it. The stars in the distance, dim and indistinct, appeared to feel its vibrations. After a while the music ceased and I noticed a commotion in the milky-way almost overhead. It seemed as if millions of stars, moved by a sudden impulse, had started revolving about each other in what appeared to be a space ten feet in diameter. They revolved around faster and faster, occasionally throwing off stars, which darted into the void and disappeared.



Ignacio Darnaude Rojas - Marcos

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This lasted for scarcely a minute, when the disorder ceased. In the center of the circle was plainly outlined a cross of stars, adorned with a crown of thorns. This presently faded and left the milky-way in its natural state. Just as it faded I plainly heard from myriads of tongues the refrain, "Peace on earth, good will to men". I fancied I could see in the far heavens flashing in the moonlight the silver tips of angel wings. The song died away and everything grew silent. After that I could not sleep till nearly day, when I fell into a soft slumber. I am at a loss to account for it. It could not have been a dream. It was too vivid, and I can not account for it. While it is possible that Eastertide may have had something to do with it. I am not prepared to say that it did. I relate it as it occurred to me, and I give you my word as an honest man and as a Christian that I saw what I saw. If you doubt it I refer you to any one at Montalba, Tex., who will tell you I am at least regarded as truthful. When the reporter recovered from the strangeness of the adventures, Mr. Williams was some distance down the street.

4

"C.G. WILLIAMS SAW IT. IT WAS ON THE GROUND AND HE INTERVIEWED THE CAPTAIN"

Greenville, Hunt Co., Tex., April 17.- (To "The News").- I have surely seen the airship. I saw it last night about 12 o'clock. I was walking across a field two miles south of town. I was in a meditative mood, and suddenly I was aroused by a brilliant light in front of me. I was dazzled by the light and frightened almost out of my senses. I should have left the place at once but my legs refused to move.

As soon as I could recover a little I noticed that the lights had gone out and by the light of the moon I saw an immense cigar shaped vessel resting on the ground in front of me. I saw three men walk out of the vessel. Two of them went to work about the rigging of the ship. The other called to me and asked if I would mail some letters for him. This gave me courage to approach and talk with him. Having been at one time connected with a daily paper and by mere reporterial instinct I took out my pencil and paper. Seeing this the strange visitor said: "See here, young man, don't give this thing away. We are experimenting with this vessel. So far it is a success. We expect to revolutionize travel and transportation. We have seen a few copies of the daily newspapers and are very much amused and entertained at the accounts of the appearance of our ship. If you

will promise on the square not to reveal what I have just told you a little history of our adventures".

"At a little town in the interior of New York state I have worked for many years on my ship. About two weeks ago I started accompanied by these two assistants to make a trial trip. My intention at first was to make a very short trip. We started in the night to avoid being seen. Everything worked so well that I decided to keep going, and I soon found myself passing over the state of Indiana. We stopped in a secluded spot near a small railway station. I went into the town and procured a daily paper, which gave an account of my ship being seen. Since that time we have been passing from place to place at a rapid rate of speed. Occasionally we stop near a town to get the newspapers. I am going home in a few days to improve my ship. I find some improvements necessary to perfect it. This trial trip has been most satisfactory. You will hear from me again in a short while, and then it will not be vague reports, but a full description of the modern wonder, the airship".

I had a good opportunity to look at the exterior of the monster while its occupant was talking. It is much the shape of a cigar. The main body appeared to be about 30 feet long. Great wings shaped fans spread out either side. At the front end was a large wheel much like the side wheels of a steamboat, but made of very light material. At the rear end was a fanlike projection like the tail of a fish. The whole was about 75 feet long. I asked my visitor to explain his ship, how it was propelled, etc.. He simply replied: "Electricity. Within are electrical machines, which furnish the motive power, and the lights. When once in motion the wind operating on the large wheel in front like a windmill keeps the ship in motion and but little electricity is needed. Now, young man, I can't tell you any more. Just wait and you will learn all about it. If you will mail these letters and not disclose the names and address and keep this all quiet for awhile, and will give me your name I will return soon and take you with me on a trip to Mexico and South America". I promised not to give him away. He and his assistants went inside, there was a flash of light, a hissing noise, the monster rose gracefully and flew away in a northeast direction. I am in honor bound not to disclose the names and postoffice address of the letters. I deposited them in the Greenville postoffice that night. When my visitor returns and I leave with him for Mexico and South America I will write "The News" regularly. It is a grand invention, and I am fully convinced that in a short while we shall discard slow railroad trains and ocean steamers.

C.G. WILLIAMS.

(From "The Dallas Morning News", Dallas, Texas, Monday April 19th 1.897).

## The Great Texas Airship Mystery

By Wallace O. Chariton. Plano, TX: Woodward Publishing Co., Inc. 280 pgs. \$16.95

The tale has been told before, but "The Great Texas Airship Mystery" is a fascinating recapitulation of the way things were in Texas during the months (Nov., 1896-May, 1987) when all America was fascinated by the "mystery airships" being reported in various parts of the United States.

I emphasize "in Texas," because, as Texas historian Chariton found when he began delving into his state's airship reports, Texas was uniquely different from other states whose citizens were also reporting the airship.

As is generally known, the "airship mystery" began in California when, on Nov. 17, 1896, hundreds of people in Sacramento swore they had seen a mysterious light sailing through the night skies. Within days, more reports came in and newspapers throughout the U.S. were carrying "airship" reports.

Except in Texas.

For some peculiar reason—and Chariton, for all his research, is not sure why—virtually all Texas papers, aside from one or two that carried extremely brief accounts of the initial Sacramento sighting, paid no attention to airship sightings until April 12, 1887 when "two men in Ennis, Texas saw a strange flying object pass in front of the moon."

"The mysterious airship," writes Chariton, "had arrived in Texas. It stayed exactly thirty days and was supposedly seen by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Texans." Indeed, reports Chariton, so many people craned their necks looking up that doctors reported having to treat a new affliction called "airship neck." [Has anyone heard, in this modern age, of "UFO neck"?]

And what were people seeing? Like its flying counterparts elsewhere in the U.S., the Texas airships were variously described:

Size—varied from 25 to 200 feet long. Thickness or diameter up to 50 feet.

Shape—Usually, though not always, described as "like a Mexican cigar," which meant, unlike today's almost uniformly cylindrical cigars, a fat midsection tapered at both ends. But "boat-shaped" bodies were also mentioned as were bird-like shapes, which brings us to . . .

Wings—One or two per side, usually a ribbed "bat-like" shape was described. Some wings flapped, others were rigid.

Propulsion—Some witnesses, having found airships on the ground, were given tours of the craft and reported the motive power as "steam" "highly condensed electricity" [!], electric motors or compressed gases." The gases were said to be derived from "splitting" water into its constituent parts and "burning" the oxygen.

Gondolas and other hanging appendages were sometimes reported. These were variously described as "boat shaped" or like a bicycle frame without wheels.

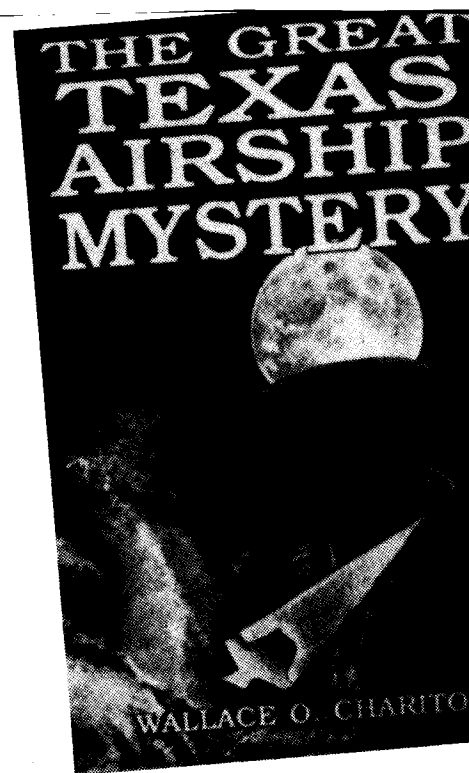
Crews—uniformly terrestrial, speaking English, although some witnesses who heard voices from aloft as airships sailed by, reported "unknown tongues" and, in one instance, "Greek."

Where were they from? One group claimed descent from legendary wandering Jewish tribes, and said they had settled in "North Pole Land" while others more prosaically said they were from small towns in various states including Iowa and New York. Witnesses speculated on more distant lands—the moon or Mars.

But of course no one really knew. No inventor ever appeared to claim credit and to demonstrate his airship, and none of those who claimed close encounters had cameras to record what they said they saw. (There were, of course, numerous drawings made from eyewitness accounts, and Chariton has included many taken directly from newspapers of the day.)

So what can we conclude from all this? Chariton, after "thousands of hours of research" into microfilm files of all surviving newspapers of the time, plus checking the existence of witnesses by reviewing tax records and local histories, says simply "there is no definitive answer that will be universally accepted," and I fear I have to agree.

But Chariton does leave us with



room to speculate. Like any good folklorist, he can (and does) provide reason not to completely discount all those reports from so many folks in so many parts of Texas. He even holds out a tiny (though largely tongue-in-cheek) hope that the famous Aurora airship crash—you remember, the airship that crashed into Judge Proctor's windlass (erroneously identified as a windmill in most accounts) and whose dead pilot was identified as a "Martian" and buried in the local cemetery—might really have happened.

Indeed, he says, he plans to be in Aurora at dawn on April 17, 1997, just in case "some alien creature will return looking for a long-lost father or grandfather who came to earth so many years ago and never returned. If you care to join me," he says, "bring your camera, bioculars, something to sit on, and doughnuts. I'll supply the Dr. Pepper."

In sum, then, *The Great Texas Airship Mystery* is a fascinating and detailed examination of the days when America's citizens, if not her inventors and engineers, were ready for the advent of heavier-than-air flight (to say nothing of possible Martian visitors!). No serious student of either folklore or UFOs should be without this book. —George W. Earley

**THE GREAT AIRSHIP MYSTERY** by Daniel Cohen  
New York, 1981, illus., 212 pp., \$12.95

Reviewed by Robert Barrow

Do numerous airships, witnessed by thousands of observers over numerous areas of the United States in the past century? Unfortunately, neither reader nor author can answer upon completion of this book. In fact, the author's delight in reading books from back to front is evident in store, for they will pick up the author's "Pursuit" view and the reasons why he presents his material in the fashion he does far sooner than conventional

readers. It is understood that the author can only go so far on this topic, which relies heavily upon questionable newspaper reports of nearly century-old events. Cohen attempts, generally, to be open-minded about the airship controversy, with which most *Pursuit* readers are certainly familiar, but airship aficionados, content with a few theories that possibly extend beyond the current find portions of this accumulation a bit difficult to accept.

Initially, expecting a routine re-report on airships, I was surprised to pass this one up. However, its pages *did* reveal a surprising quality: Cohen's so-called book about airships is, on the other hand, an informative indication of the less respectable aspects of early American journalism.

Cohen prominently questions, for example, the role of the millionaire tycoon William Randolph Hearst played in the history of the airship sightings, and, in particular, his puzzling decision to have the phenomenon reported in his *Los Angeles Examiner*, while apparently treating the observations as highly credible in his *New York Journal*. Equally as disconcerting to the author are the numerous instances where an airship story apparently worthwhile for follow-up suddenly "disappears from the record forever."

Of value, the various incidents and anecdotes presented effectively remind us that journalism some 70 years ago left a legacy to its modern news-reporting colleagues. The "knee-jerk tendency to deal with UFO (or airship?) reports by ridiculing witnesses before investigations are conducted."

The book also has an interesting section on Thomas Edison's reaction to the airship stories, makes a valid point about "bar clubs" of the era, and reprints a few satirical, but intriguing, poems about the airborne phenomenon.

In all means, read *Airship Mystery* if the news media is your interest. If the airships themselves are your curiosity, read a couple of the sources Cohen quotes (such as writings by researchers Loren Gross and Lucius Farish); *this* title, as a reference, is on risky ground—unless one enjoys reading speculation that progresses from century-old airships to modern UFOs with the anemic and dubious theories of UFO debunker Philip Klass and others thrown in for good measure.

"Now, for the first time," claims the book jacket, "UFO expert Daniel Cohen gives the full story of the great airship mystery and explains how it is related to the continuing mystery of the UFOs today." UFO expert? Full story? Explains how? Since this release is as important to

UFO findings as it is wanting about the airships, with little more than a little conjecture and glue binding its pages together, one can easily suggest that—drat—yet another dust jacket has led us astray.

**WHOLENESS AND THE IMPLICATE ORDER** by David Bohm (Rutledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987)

Reviewed by Richard D. Wright

David Bohm, whose theory of what he calls the "implicate order" of the universe has caused a stir among physicists, physiologists, and philosophers, accepts classical science within its limits, works its way through the physics of relativity and quantum theory, and produces a startling view of the nature of reality.

As early as 1957, in his book *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics*, he stated that "scientific research does not and cannot lead to a knowledge of nature that is completely free from error. Rather it leads and is able to lead only to an unending process in which the degree of truth in our knowledge is continually increasing." The book reaffirmed the questing nature of science and was hailed as "a return to common sense" within the field.

In the generation since that book (now a minor classic), David Bohm has used that common sense to develop his theory of the nature of reality. Much talked about for the last decade, it received its current statement in 1980 in the book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*.

Bohm's theory goes beyond the paradigms of classical physics, which is the basic physics learned in high school. Speaking generally, classical physics is built on precepts of order assumed to be permanent. It is a kind of order that may be called a "lens-system" order. To understand what this means, remember that our concept of order is based upon the information perceived by the five senses and particularly by the sense of sight. This sensory information is all-pervasive and timeless. When it is coupled with the learned, logical-linear structures of language, it dominates our thinking. One can understand why this concept of order developed in science at the same time that the lens was developed and became widely used as a scientific tool.

A primary fact about lenses is that they bring details into sharp focus: that is, they objectify. The focus may be on the minute complexities seen through a microscope or the glorious vastness witnessed through a telescope. The use of lenses strengthened man's awareness of the parts of an object and relationships between parts, even those that cannot be seen by the naked eye. Because lens systems allowed one to break things down into ever finer parts of larger units, the tendency developed in science to think in terms of analysis and synthesis. This tendency became so predominant that the classical approach became an analytical approach. It created a framework for the development of the "scientific method" and, within it, the scientific method was shown to be valid. The next step was then to extrapolate beyond the lens system, using the well-established scientific conventions of logic and reason.

This view created what can be called a mechanism approach to reality, which is an approach in which the world is regarded as constituted of separate units, each of which is viewed as if through a photographic lens, with point-to-point imaging even of things that cannot be seen by the naked eye.

1976

person experiences available to lovers of ghostly lore is that the sites are available for visiting. The 22 ghosts described in the Lincoln guide may possibly be witnessed.

While credible for ghost stories, the book suffers from sloppy editing and presentation. Still, the large typeface is easy to read, and the end is reached perhaps too quickly.

The Complete Roadside Guide to Nebraska is a thorough atlas of unusual events that have occurred during the entire history of Nebraska, and include early UFO episodes in the town of Max in 1884, and in 1897 in Omaha and Vale. At least ten municipalities have been visited by "elliptical, hovering, glowing objects as large as a hanger" since approximately 1900.

Many other accounts of UFO sightings are scattered throughout the book, including one by Air Force Major Paul Duich, at Offutt Air Force Base Strategic Air Command headquarters in 1958 (on pg. 15). He describes a vapor trail that changed colors and metamorphosed into a cigar shape—with 25 witnesses, including officers and civilians. A colonel was able to take photographs, since the object remained in the sky for 10 minutes, but they were never seen by other witnesses.

If you travel in Nebraska, your trip would be made more interesting by bringing copies of these books with you.— Les Stern

Ask Your Angels

Alma Daniels, Timothy Wyllie and Andrew Ramer, Ballantine, NY, Softcover, 1992, 358 pgs., \$10.00

The Angels Within Us

John Randolph Price, Fawcett Columbine, NY, Softcover, 1993, 336 pgs., \$11.00

A Book of Angels

Sophy Burnham, Ballantine, Softcover, 1990, 295 pgs., \$10.00

Angel Letters

Sophy Burnham, Ballantine, Hardcover, 1991, 140 pgs., \$15.00

Numerous similar books offer angel lore and true stories about encounters with angels. If you have to chose one, pick Ask Your Angels. It is full of information about the angel kingdom, much of which is drawn from the personal experiences of the authors.

The book is geared to people seeking to establish rapport with angels. The authors have had ample experience conducting private and group sessions toward those goals, and present their own life experiences—painful, transformative, and joyful—with candor. They explain clearly how they work with angels, and provide specific, usable techniques for others to do likewise.

Ask Your Angels is a great handbook for anyone seeking higher paths to spiritual development. The authors provide numerous options, so that readers can find what suits them best—working with an-

Military Reservation Firing Range and the Hanford Works of the U.S. A.E.C. Reservation. Sightings of UFO's often have been recorded in the vicinity of Atomic Energy Commission installations. However, it cannot be ascertained at this time whether this is a factor in these latest sightings. Moreover, this is not the first time there has been a wave of UFO sightings on an Indian Reservation.

The 1890s "Flap"

By Jerry Mathers

(Cont'd from the Nov. Issue)

Next reports come from almost a thousand miles west in central Nebraska around Hastings. The Feb. 10 Juniata Herald said the craft floated about 500 feet up "and after standing nearly still for about 30 minutes it began to circle about, then took a northerly direction for about two miles, after which it returned to its starting place and sank into oblivion."

A few days later the airship was "standing still" several miles west of Hastings. At first, the Herald said, people thought it to be a star but after careful observation decided that the color of the light showed it to be "artificial." "It certainly must be illuminated by a powerful electric dynamo, for the light sent forth by it is wonderful."

On Feb. 17 the Herald reported "without joking" a very large light in the sky that "seems to be like an electric arc light with a glass dome over it, and floated high in the air, then sideways for a distance, then drop, then disappear and reappear some distance away."

Two hundred miles southwest of Hastings in the extreme corner of Nebraska near the village of Haigler the airship put on a nightly show for about two weeks.

Edna Campbell, 15, walking home from a rural schoolhouse, was astonished by a brilliant light that appeared about a mile away. The light darted forward, stopped, then darted forward again. Several times it circled at high rates of speed.

Edna and her family watched the show between 9 and 10 every night for two weeks; sometimes as many as six circuits, sometimes within a quarter mile.

Sightings were also reported at Cripple Creek, Colo., which might have been the same ship. But about the same time other reports were coming in from as far as Washington, D.C.

On Feb. 25 at Wymore in southern Nebraska about 100 persons saw the phenomenon. "As it approached us the light became so brilliant it dazzled our eyes," said one witness.

(See "Flap" - Page Six)

December 1993/FATE 109

Just the beginning. The door has been opened here, and time will tell what happens next.

\*\*\*\*\*

Review

(Continued from Page Two)

back in 1970, according to Gordon Creighton's letter to Flying Saucer Review in that year's Sept. - Oct. issue. By publishing it now, however, Stanford was able to include a chapter on the activities and methods of his Project Starlight International, which is

Status LOOKOUT a bright white light which disappeared after moving parallel to Status Creek and US 97. Ranch hands and visitors at a cattle ranch along US 97 have often observes similar lights in this area about the same time each night.

The area encompassed by the Yakima Indian Reservation is certainly noted for mysterious and puzzling occurrences. It has been the location of previous unexplained night lights, humanoid sightings, and auto light malfunctions. All of the above mentioned sightings appear to have occurred within the boundaries of the reservation. Therefore, it is unlikely that they can be ascribed to activities originating in two important adjacent areas to the east. These are the US

APRO, DEC - 76

APRO, DEC - 76

## "Flap"

(Continued from Page Five)

Throughout February and March sightings came from "reputable citizens" in Omaha, York, North Platte, Beatrice, Falls City and Kearney. It was as though the object was surveying the south half of Nebraska, an area of 35,000 square miles.

On March 28 the object decided to visit Kansas for a change, naturally picking the capital, Topeka. About 200 people saw it from the steps of the Capitol. Some people hustled off to cellars, fearing the world was coming to an end. Residents of northeast Kansas towns of Atchison, Hiawatha, Holton and Belleville observed the airship about the same time.

The next night a ship was reported at Omaha, 160 miles north. And the night following this, the ship (or was it the Cripple Creek craft?) visited Denver, 480 miles southwest of Omaha.

On April 5 at 9 p.m. the ship reappeared in Omaha "causing a sensation." The motorman and conductor of a streetcar watched the ship hover some 600 feet up. They described the object as about 90 feet long and cigar-shaped, with wings fore and aft. At the front end was a bright light, at the rear a red light.

For a few seconds the thing almost stopped. Then it sped up and disappeared.

Other people saw it. Said the Omaha Bee: "All descriptions tally in regard to lights, for all who were fortunate enough to get a glimpse of the thing which is causing so much conjecture, state that it carried two of them, and that they were red and white."

Initiation ceremonies at the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, the most prominent of Omaha community clubs, had a special added attraction that night. Reported the Morning World-Herald, April 6:

"About 50 members of the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben were treated to the sight of the airship last evening, the sight being observed twice, and each time for space from five to eight minutes.

"About nine o'clock, while the initiation was in progress, the attention of the members was attracted by a bright light flashing past the west windows of the den. They immediately sprang up to the window and saw a luminary appearing at least 18 inches in diameter, the reflection from which passed along what appeared to be a steel body, the length of which could only be estimated at from 12 to 30 feet.

"The object was about three-quarters of a mile high and a little over a mile west of the den. A stampede was at once made for the south entrance, when the course of the ship was watched for some five or six minutes. Its course was due south

until it reached, so near as could be judged, about the southern limits of South Omaha, the distance from the den being covered in about three minutes." (That's about five miles.)

The World-Herald continues: "It then described a semicircle to the east, following that direction for about a mile, when it turned against the northeast wind and traveled in that direction about half a mile. It then turned east, after some vacillations, and was lost behind a bank of clouds.

"After the initiation, while waiting for the cars, they saw the ship again."

Two days later the paper said "a thousand people in Omaha, more or less, have seen the airship, or rather the lights attached to the airship." The World-Herald then quoted Father Rigge, professor of astronomy at Creighton College (now University) as saying:

"I am satisfied in my own mind that the alleged ship seen about a month ago was the planet Venus . . . The last airship was undoubtedly a balloon which some wag had sent up to enjoy the fun!"

Sound familiar to present-day "scientific explanations"? A Venus 90 feet long with lights on each end which made circles, stopped and started, and could go in any direction certainly should have brought the good astronomer out at night with his telescope.

The World-Herald reported many prominent men saw the airship and no doubt they had their private opinion of scientists after that remarkable statement that completely ignored the observations.

The airship headed east apparently. On April 8 it was seen at Cedar Rapids, Ia., 250 miles from Omaha, at 9 p.m. At 10 p.m. the same night a ship was spotted at Northwood, Ia., near the Minnesota line about 150 miles northwest of Cedar Rapids.

On April 10-11 an airship was reported at various towns in eastern Iowa - Ottumwa at 7:25 p.m. April 10, Eldon at 7:40 15 miles away; and also Reinbeck, Shell, and Waterloo.

It is possible this same ship visited Kansas City and Chicago. It was seen by many around Kansas City April 1 pausing to shoot down a brilliant white searchlight beam. Kansas City is 500 miles east of Denver and 200 south of Omaha where it had been seen previous nights.

The Chicago sighting was on the night of April 9 from 8 p.m. until 2 the next morning. Said the New York Herald: "Thousands of amazed persons declared that the lights seen in the northwest were those of an airship, or some floating object, miles above the earth . . . Some declared that they could distinguish two cigar-shaped objects and great wings."

Two giant searchlights were also mentioned by Chicago witnesses.

Anyway, the ship or ships were back in Nebraska April 12. The sighting

was - coincidentally? - at Ashland, which in 1967 was the site of the sensational Patrolman Schirmer contactee case. The description in the Ashland Gazette of April 16 reported what a lady saw the previous Sunday night:

"Something quite small . . . about the size of an ordinary room. It appeared not far from the ground and was hovering over the western part of town. Its flight was rapid and twice it moved to the north, twice it flashed its brilliant light and shot beyond its range of vision."

The night after, the ship was observed at Deadwood, S.D., 450 northwest of Ashland and at Harrison, Neb., 130 miles south of Deadwood. The "airship of gigantic dimensions" was seen by lawyers, jurors and witnesses who were attending the spring term of district court.

The Omaha World-Herald said that when discovered, it was "sailing in a southeasterly direction at what seemed to be an extraordinary speed when suddenly, to the astonishment of all, it seemed to slacken its speed and careen around in a circle, and then came to a stop and hung motionless as if suspended by a rope for several minutes."

Witnesses said the ship had different colored lights which alternated from white to red, blue and green. Then extremely bright lights shot from either side of the craft and it left.

The same or another ship was spotted "dangerously close" to the Missouri River at Decatur, Neb., which is 400 miles east of Harrison, the same night. It was the second sighting at Decatur.

The following night, April 14, the airship was seen at Plainview, Neb., 80 miles west of Decatur, and also at Red Cloud and Oak, Neb., 160 miles south of Plainview. And sightings came from 140 miles north of Plainview at Canton and Woonsocket, S.D.

The Plainview sighting was described thus in the Omaha World-Herald: "Sioux City, Ia. - Station agent Murphy of the Pacific Short Line Railroad wired today from Plainview, Neb., to his superior, Train Dispatcher Jackson of this place, that the airship passed over that place at 9 o'clock last night. It was in view five minutes, bore two lights and looked like an immense cigar. The whole town turned out to view the phenomenon."

The ensuing night reports came from Columbus, Silver Creek and Clarks in east-central Nebraska, and from Underwood, Ia., just east of Omaha and 90 miles east of Columbus.

The next night reports came from Villisca, Ia., 70 miles southeast of Underwood, and from Clay Center, Neb., 180 miles southwest of Columbus and 275 miles west of the Villisca sighting.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Continued in  
Next Issue)



three "men in black", though even these descriptions are corrupted by such probable fictions as "their eyes shone like tiny flashlight bulbs". Two objections can be raised to Bender's tale. First, the whole tenor of his experience is different than that related in your earlier book. In your book, there is an undercurrent of almost psychic fear that cannot be justified by anything in Bender's book. Secondly, assuming Bender's recent story to be true, the "bad slip" he claims he made in the interview recorded in your book would be very easily located. Clearly, that discovery which held Bender in fear still holds him so, and you could not drag the true story out of him with a Sherman tank! Bender was probably ordered to write the book by the same people who keep him sworn to silence.

I think I know Bender's secret. Roughly speaking, he discovered the following:

That for several thousand years (at least) this solar system has been visited by interstellar and even intergalactic civilizations.

That since circa 1897 this planet has been under sporadic observation by beings from another star, this observation being in three waves - the 1897 "flap", a small "task-force" from 1898 until 1943, and the main visitation since 1944.

That this visitation is by a civilization between two or three hundred years in advance of our own probably from the Eridani system.

That these visitors are humanoid, apparently olive-skinned, in the main very slightly shorter than Earth average.

That among these visitors are a good many "midgets", of much the type usually seen on Earth; they are expert "technicians", who because of their size are valued as space-voyages - that is, they can easily service the engines of the "saucers". They are often employed by terrestrial aircraft companies for just this purpose. These little men are often pilots of very small scoutcraft.

That for the past twenty years Earth has been at war with the flying saucers. While the weapons of the spacecrafts are far in advance of anything on Earth, we are winning the war because of the tremendously-long supply-lines of the

enemy.

Bender's visitors were CIA men, who forbade him to reveal what he knew. The visitors were (and are) afraid of public panic if people learned that their planet was under attack by people from outer space. The CIA agents warned Bender that if he "left the cat out of the bag" that he would go to jail for a very, very long time. If the visitors had been spacemen, they would simply have killed Bender, or spirited him away, perhaps to the home planet.

The space-people have a subversive spy-system on Earth, with agents in various governmental and social circles. The whole thing much resembles the television program, THE INVADERS, which may be a CIA "leak" to "prepare" the public for a future announcement that Earth really is "at war with the flying saucers"!

Sincerely  
Name Withheld

#### INTERCEPTED LETTER

Mr. Riley Crabb, Dir.  
Borderland Sciences  
Research Associates  
P.O. Box 548  
Vista, California

Dear Mr. Crabb:

Shortly before the Colorado UFO flap, and almost immediately after the Alamosa incident (Snippy the pony's death, attributed to a UFO), several strange incidents occurred in Las Vegas.

During the weekend of September 17, 1967, a UFO with the same magnitude as Venus appeared in the West. It moved from the West and traversed Northeast, moving ap-

proximately 3-5 degrees per second. The object was an intense electric blue and there was a fuzzy haze around it. Although the intensity of its light made it difficult to determine its actual shape, it did seem to be disc-shaped. It cast a bright reflection on shiny objects on the ground, as well as on a thin layer of clouds overhead. Later that evening I noted a strong odor of burned plastic, along with the stench of iron sulfide.

On the Wednesday following this incident, a more controversial sighting, made by close to a hundred of my fellow classmen as well as some townspeople, occurred. At about 10:30 p.m. Mountain Time a formation of dim-lighted objects passed from Northeast to West of Las Vegas. The speed of these objects surpassed the calculated speed of any migrating fowl. They were circular, at an approximate elevation of 2,000 to 5,000 feet above the city, this calculation being made by referring to the relative positions of the UFOs and the scattered cloud layers. The objects were visible at times when below the lowest cloud layer and beyond visibility when above the clouds. The cloud elevations were tabulated in geology lab the following day, based on weather reports for the evening.

I might add that there is little aircraft regularly over the immediate city, except for some commercial flights and some minor activity from Air Force bases in Colorado.

I call the latter a "controversial" sighting, because some fellow students and I received threats as a result of it. The next day a friend phoned me and reported he

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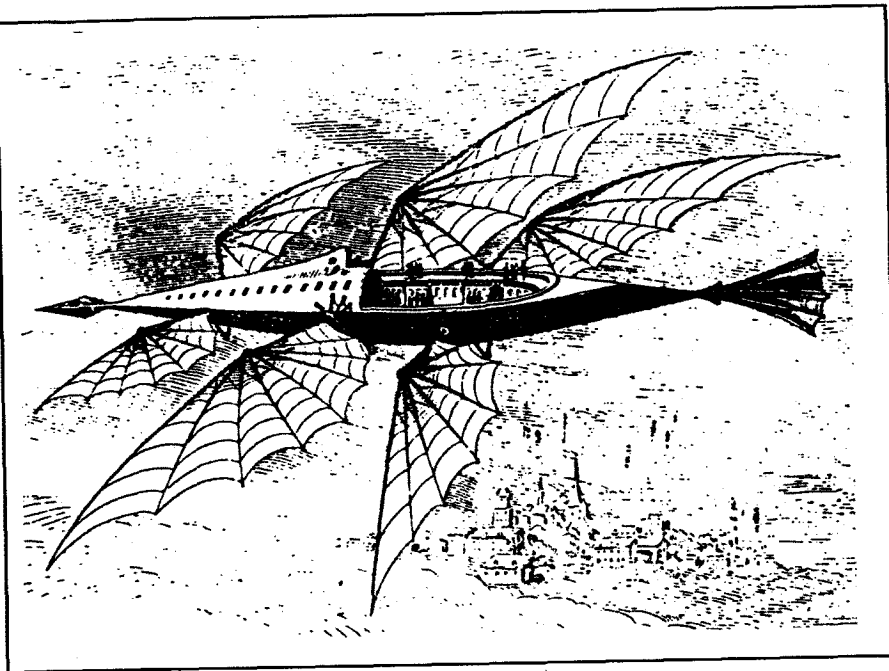
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# The Airships of 1897

*Hoax, UFOs, or cutting-edge technology?*



Airship drawing from 1897.

by J. Allan Danelek

Many people regard the Kenneth Arnold sighting of several flying disks over Mount Rainier in 1947 to be the official start of the modern age of ufology, but that would be incorrect. Actually, it all started earlier than that—almost 50 years earlier, in fact—with the air-

ship flap of 1896–97, which to this day remains one of the most controversial elements of the entire UFO debate.

For those unfamiliar with this brief but curious incident (or series of incidents, as the sightings lasted several months), it all started on the evening of November 17, 1896, when a bright light appeared through

the dark rainclouds over Sacramento, California, and slowly made its way westward over the capitol building, only to disappear once again into the night leaving hundreds of the cities' residents wondering what they had just witnessed. It was described by various witnesses as "cigar shaped" and reportedly sported oversized propellers and rudders on its undercarriage, all visible due to its low altitude and slow progress. Among those who saw the vessel was an assistant to the Secretary of State, who, along with several friends, watched the vessel for several minutes from the capitol dome. One person even described it as having wheels at its side "like the side wheels on Fulton's old steamboat."

The mysterious object was seen over Sacramento again five days later, this time witnessed by thousands of people, including the city's deputy sheriff and a district attorney. Most agreed it was a cigar-shaped object of some size and that it moved slowly but methodically over the city before disappearing to the southwest. It supposedly appeared later that evening over San Francisco, some 90 miles away, where it was seen by hundreds of people and reportedly cruised over the Pacific Ocean, flashing its spotlight toward the Cliff House, one of San Francisco's most famous landmarks.

The area papers quickly caught "airship fever" and began reporting the mysterious vessel appearing elsewhere over California and as far north as Washington State and Canada. The sightings, however, abated by the end of December, and nothing more was seen of the mysterious "airship" for

nearly two months. When it reappeared, it showed up far from California, this time over Hastings, Nebraska, on the evening of February 2, 1897. Soon it was spotted throughout the Midwest, from Texas to Iowa and from Kansas to Missouri. It even supposedly appeared over Chicago on the evening of April 11, where a photograph was reportedly taken (the first UFO photo on record, if authentic) and four days later over Kalamazoo, where it crashed and exploded, according to one local paper. Though reports continued after that, they soon diminished until by summer the airship flap of 1896–97 was over and the world was left with one more mystery to ponder.

## Unanswered Questions

To this day, no one is certain what this object (or objects) might have been. Debunkers maintain it was all the product of yellow journalism—the tendency of newspapers to invent stories in an effort to increase sales—mixed with mass hysteria in which people imagined any light in the sky (sometimes speculated to having been an unusually bright Venus) to be the rogue airship. Today many in the UFO community, noting that UFOs are sometimes described as being cigar-shaped, have decided that these were early appearances by extraterrestrials, designed perhaps to test our level of sophistication (and apparently deciding we weren't ready for them yet.) Both explanations, however, leave us with more questions than answers.

The hoax/mass hysteria theory, for ex-

ample, fails to account for the initial sightings over California; newspapers didn't report on the object until after it had been seen by supposedly thousands of witnesses, while the mass hysteria theory fails to explain how such a thing can occur in a generally geographic straight line (moving from California through Nebraska and Iowa and finishing in Michigan.)

Even if we assume that the majority of reports were spurious or mistaken, it is curious how mass hysteria is capable of affecting only people along a particular path. Further, it is uncertain how many Midwesterners would have been aware of the earlier California sightings and so be inclined to imagine that the mysterious airship was headed their way; newspapers rarely picked up general interest stories from other places in the country, preferring instead to stick with national headlines and stories of local interest.

Media coverage of the sightings tended to follow the appearances, not precede them as would be expected if the media was simply priming the country for more stories. Finally, the modern theory of extraterrestrials also seems unlikely, especially in view of the descriptions given by many witnesses that described propellers, wings, rudders, and undercarriages on the vessel—all appendages unlikely to be seen on an interplanetary vehicle.

So what was the thing that crossed the countryside that winter of 1896–97 to cause such a stir?

Interestingly, at the time most thought

the vehicle neither imaginary nor extraterrestrial, but evidence of cutting-edge technology. They saw it as a very man-made machine being put through its paces by some intrepid inventor intent on bringing lighter-than-air flight to humanity. They thought it was a powered balloon or, more accurately, a dirigible.

Most dismiss this explanation, however, as being inconsistent with the capability of the time. The world was still in its technological infancy at this stage; although the lightbulb and the telephone had both been introduced, most people still used kerosene lamps and the U.S. mail to communicate. The Wright brothers were five years away from putting their tiny airplane into the air, and a practical automobile was still under development. The idea that anyone in that era could construct a working dirigible was beyond reason or, at least, so it seemed.

But can we really be so certain that the technology to build an airship was truly beyond the inventors of the late 19th century? A quick look into the history books will demonstrate how presumptuous this statement is.

### Early History of Airships

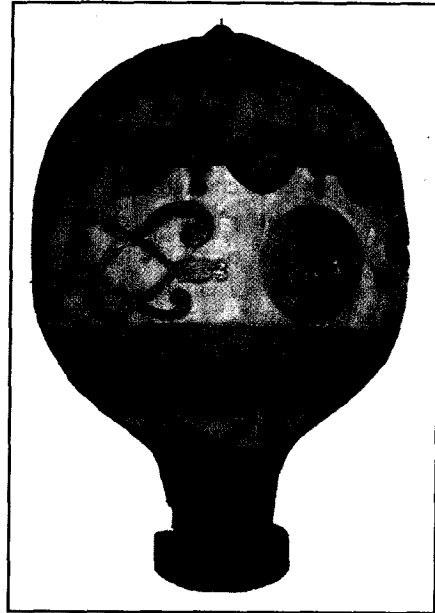
Ever since the Montgolfier Brothers first flew their hot-air balloon over Paris in 1789, humans had been used to the idea of artificial flight.

What differentiated an airship from a mere balloon, however, was the ability to make it steerable, rather than being subject

to the vagaries of air currents and wind. The first experiments to this effect were carried out by Britain's "father of aviation" Sir George Cayley in the 1830s. Unfortunately, Cayley lacked the means to effectively power such a ship and he gave up. Others, however, picked up on his ideas and further developed them until by 1850 a Frenchman, Pierre Jullien of Villejuif, demonstrated a model for a steerable airship. It was up to another Frenchman, Henri Giffard, however, to build and actually fly the first true airship in 1852. At 44 meters in length (almost 150 feet) and powered by a 2.2-kilowatt steam engine, he was able to travel the nearly 27 kilometers between Paris and Trappes, France, without incident, all at the remarkable speed of ten kilometers per hour.

Further development of the airship was made in the 1880s when Charles Renard and Arthur Krebs built an electric-powered model named the *France* that was able to maneuver under its own power. German designer David Schwarz built the first true dirigible (the earlier vehicles being essentially limp, cigar-shaped balloons tethered to a rigid undercarriage) and tested it at Tempelhof airfield in Berlin on November 3, 1897. Three short years later German general Ferdinand von Zeppelin would build his first airship, the LZ-1, and the age of LTA (lighter-than-air) travel was born.

Considering that airships had been under development in Europe prior to the airship flap of 1896-97, what are the chances that an American might have suc-

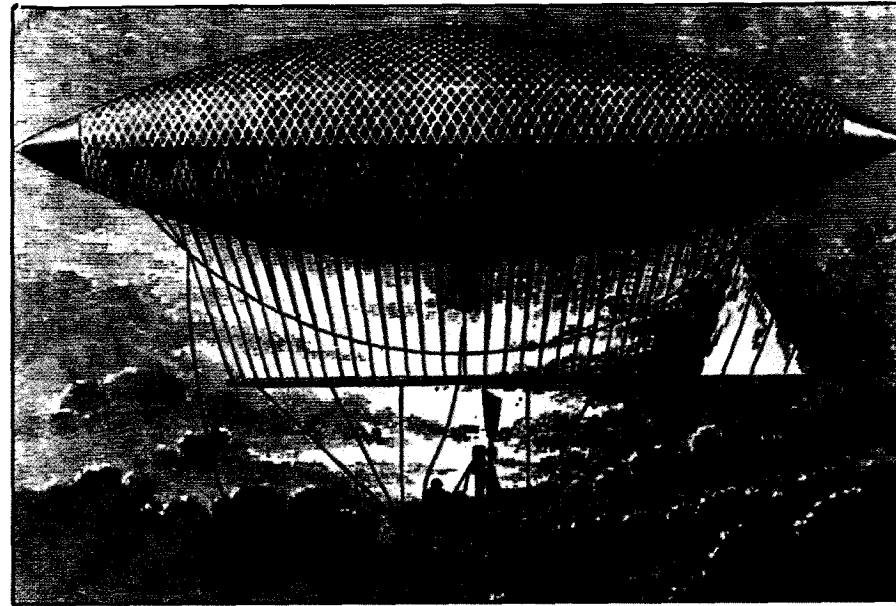


The Montgolfier balloon.

ceeded in creating the first practical and long-range example, the product of which would become the source of six months of sensationalism and rumor? Let's consider the possibilities.

### Overcoming the Technological Hurdle

The chief complaint made by many is that the materials and technology needed to construct a working airship were unavailable in 1896. We have already seen that such is not only untrue, but that proof of the concept had been demonstrated almost 50 years earlier. Connecting a series of hydrogen-filled balloons and enclosing



Henri Giffard's 1852 powered airship.

lionaires of any city west of the Mississippi in 1897. It isn't difficult to imagine that a reclusive and possibly even eccentric inventor was able to not only find the required investment capital to build and operate an airship, but could construct the facilities necessary to maintain it (probably somewhere in the San Fernando Valley) in complete secrecy.

Of course, it would require considerable capital to make this work as well as a well-outfitted workshop (and the men needed to operate it), but would that be any more difficult to accomplish than it was for Bell or Edison, contemporaries of the era? The necessary equipment could easily be shipped from the East Coast to

San Francisco, assembled in privacy, and be up and running in short order, all hidden from the general public and the media among the barren hills of Southern California.

### The First Flights

The first sightings over Sacramento and San Francisco may have been early test flights of cutting-edge airship technology, a technology easily a decade or more ahead of its time. Clearly, such is not an unreasonable hypothesis, considering that all the elements required to construct and operate a small dirigible (rubber air bags, girder material, steering gear, even various power plants) were all available by the mid-

them within a light but rigid frame of aluminum or wood was well within the capabilities of an 1896 inventor, given adequate resources and a building large enough to house the object. The problem would be finding a powerful enough engine to operate it. Diesel and gasoline-powered engines were still in their earliest stages of development in 1896, so it would have been difficult to make use of either of these two power sources. However, steam engines and electric motors were well known at the time (and, further, Giffard had demonstrated on his airship that a steam engine could be used successfully as a power source.) Other possible power plants include the electric motor, but this would have likely been hugely underpowered, requiring the use of several motors and a considerable number of heavy batteries to extend the range. But this might still be feasible if a person was able to find a way of combining an electric motor with kinetic energy; that is, several men pedaling a generator to charge the battery pack while in flight, thereby extending the range without having to carry too many batteries.

But what if we go beyond these traditional methods? What if, in fact, we are dealing with someone who might be years ahead of the competition, both in terms of airship design and the power needed to run them? Rudolf Diesel had just introduced his revolutionary new power-plant just three years earlier; could someone have gotten hold of one of his early designs and improved upon it? There's also the chance that

either the diesel or the gasoline engine could have been co-developed by more than one person at a time. Is it possible our mysterious inventor successfully developed his engine first and modified it for flight rather than for ground vehicles?

If this is what happened, why did this man not come forward with his invention for all to see? To answer this, we have to understand the mindset of the time.

### The Need for Privacy

The last half of the 19th century was a time of remarkable technological advances and tremendous competition among inventors. It wasn't easy being an inventor in 19th-century America; the drive to be the first to the patent office was cut-throat in nature, with stolen ideas and even sabotage fairly common. They had to deal with pressure from investors eager to see a quick and handsome return on their money and, finally, they had the press (who could always be counted on to prematurely proclaim each new gadget a success or failure) to deal with. Considering that a single failure could easily scare away the capital needed to continue working, it is possible that a man would want to work in secret, away from the eyes of the media or potential competitors.

If that were the case with our mystery inventor, California would have been the perfect place to work. It was still remote enough to guarantee privacy and yet it was near enough to a major seaport and sources of capital to make it ideal. San Francisco had the largest number of mil-



One-man "airship" of 1897.

1890s. They awaited only a visionary with the brilliance, vision, and determination to bring it all together.

But if this mysterious inventor wished to work in secret, why fly over two of the largest cities in California and appear to thousands of witnesses, thereby announcing your presence? Simple: the design was nearing perfection and not only needed to be flown over long distances, making the avoidance of multiple witnesses difficult, but to send a message to the vessel's investor(s) that the ship was coming along quite nicely. Clearly, at some point the vessel was going to need to be unveiled to the general public; perhaps the sightings of November and December 1896 were just a sneak preview.

It's interesting that there was a two-month break between the California sightings in 1896 and the sightings in the Mid-

west in February through April 1897. This suggests that after initial test flights were completed, the inventor was ready to unveil his new airship by over-flying America, the one way guaranteed to bring the most attention. By overflying the country, he was telegraphing his new device to the world in the most spectacular manner imaginable,

perhaps with the goal of eventually landing on the East Coast in front of a stunned media.

But something happened that prevented him from completing that goal, something unexpected, sudden, and probably tragic.

### A Fiery End or an Icy Grave?

Newspapers reported an explosion in the night skies near Kalamazoo in April 1897, after which the airship sightings petered out and eventually ended. Could the still largely untested airship have exploded over Michigan or crashed into Lake Erie and sunk, abruptly and tragically ending its maiden flight?

Skeptics will point out that no wreckage was ever found. If it exploded (it was, after all, a hydrogen balloon) and fell into a dense forest somewhere in the North-

1897

east, would there really be much left to recover? How much more so were it to have ended its flight in the frigid waters of Lake Erie.

The loss of the only airship and its brilliant inventor would have been irreplaceable; investors would have been unwilling to start from scratch and so pulled the plug, and even the workshops would have been dismantled, the equipment and tools sold in an effort to recoup losses. Perhaps out of fear of ridicule or possible legal actions, the inventor would have been quickly forgotten and the mysterious airship and its crew left to legend, where they could never be either proven nor disproven. It would have been a terrible tragedy, of course, and an incalculatable loss to science, but such would

have been the inevitable result of a noble but ill-fated experiment.

But what of the blueprints and engineering drawings such an undertaking would have produced? It is likely they were destroyed or otherwise lost. Perhaps one day they will be discovered and serve to tell the world that, just as the Anikythera computer demonstrated that technological genius existed 2,000 years ago, so too did we once have our own Archimedes of the skies under our very noses—or, in this case, over our very heads. We just failed to notice him until it was too late. ☺

*J. Allan Danelek is a professional graphic artist and illustrator living in Denver, Colorado.*

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See order form on page 126.

two weird encounters in my life. In 1972, my brother and I just got back from the local mall. I was 17 at the time. It was August. I parked the car, we were going in the house. I looked up in the sky and saw a strange lighted object. It did not move and all of a sudden it was gone.

The next day in the local paper, two police officers changing shifts reported a strange lighted object in the sky the night before. Coincidence?

Flash forward to August 29, 2001. My boyfriend and I went to a seminar at the World Trade Center, then had lunch in the shops below. Thirteen days later, we all know what happened. You never know what can happen in life. Like the saying, maybe it was fate.

Your magazine is exciting and mysterious! Keep up the good work!—Linda Hoski, Easton, Pa.

### Airship Mystery

I am writing this in response to the article about the 1897 airship mystery (July 2007). As both a member of the Lighter Than Air Society and one involved in UFO research for over 40 years, I've had an interest in this series of incidents for most of my life. I've done my own research, but to me the true story of the airships was solved to my satisfaction with the publication of Solving the 1897 Airship Mystery by Michael Busby in 2004. It is one of the most remarkable pieces of pure research I have ever read and I can only imagine the amount of digging, time, and leg-

FATE MAGAZINE

work it took to write this informative book.

Although he mentions several of the sightings around the country, Busby concentrates on the dozens of Texas sightings. He names names of the builder and crew members, reveals their backgrounds, Civil War units, and even census records that confirm their residences. He encloses copies of the patent applications for their designs. In fact, using the design of Dr. Charles A. Smith, I am now attempting to design and build a working (flying, radio-controlled) model of his airship.

Anyone who has an interest in this subject owes it to themselves to read this book.—Richard A. Banks, Crystal, Minn.

### Who Discovered America?

Kudos to you for reprinting a fascinating article, W. L. Vallette's "Who Discovered America?" (July 2007).

Anyone who'd like additional information on the author's long list of pre-Columbian visitors to our shores should consult Gunnar Thompson's *American Discovery* (1994). From what Dr. Thompson says, the Japanese, Egyptians, Chinese, Minoans, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, Welsh, Hindus, Pacific Islanders, Norsemen, Arabs, and Scotsmen arrived prior to 1492. What's more, there's evidence that medieval Basques and Prince Henry the Navigator's Portuguese explorers beat Columbus to the New World.

Again, many thanks for making W. L. Vallette's great article available!—Mary Virginia Devine, Racine, Wisc.

SEPT 2007

Lyonese, Llys Helig, Ravenser Odd, Hartburn, Dunwich and Brighthelmstone? The author must have ransacked museums and libraries for old maps, local histories, engravings and rare photographs with which he so thoroughly illustrates this charming book. This is a work of considerable and most satisfying scholarship with fascinating historical and geographical information on every page.

I cannot recommend this book too highly. It is beautifully printed and exceedingly well written. The historical detail gives the rare experience of traveling in time to watch in terror as huge waves batter the coast and tidal surges rush upon the land to produce yet another 'sunken city.'

While I hope that Forteans will buy this book--did you know that a ship was once sunk by a church?--it should also be required reading for the Corps of Engineers. Nothing built by man can for long withstand the fury of nature.

#### Phantom Aerial Flaps and Waves

by Nigel Watson. Magonia Occasional Paper No. 1, *Magonia Magazine*, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW124 8HB England. 20 pgs, quality photocopy, 95p (about \$3.00, including p/h). Make checks out to John Rimmer.

Reviewed by  
*Raymond D. Manners*

he archetypical event that provided the genesis of this booklet is the American Phantom Airship Flap of 1896/7. With hundreds of sighting accounts, conversations with airmen, reports of crashes, discovery of alien bodies and abductions of farm animals, the 1896/7 flap holds all the elements of today's flying saucer mystery, including the fact that no satisfactory explanation has ever been presented. Another important similarity is that there has never been any reliable evidence that a real aircraft or flying machine was responsible.

Public interest in aerial phenomena in that time was heightened by the publication of books by authors such as Edgar Allen Poe (*The Balloon Hoax*), Jules Verne (*Five Weeks in a Balloon*), Charles Fort (*New Lands*) and H. G. Wells (*The War in the Air*). These accounts, combined with the rapidly advancing science of aeronautics and predictions of the amazing feats these wonderful flying machines would be able to perform were often directly responsible for provoking and sustaining phantom airship and airplane flaps.

Nigel Watson presents the results of his researches into a number of sightings before 1947; his data cover the period 1830 - 1946 and include sightings from Europe, Russia, the U.S., Canada, Africa, Japan, New Zealand and Australia. Each event is covered in some detail and is accompanied by a list of references, the majority of which are from readily available books and journals. He also includes sightings of 'angels,' Springheel Jack and the BVM visions at Fatima.

It is the early airship, balloon and airplane sightings that hold the most interest, however. It is not surprising that many of the flaps occurred during the years prior to both world wars. Tensions were high, and a strange aerial machine with bright lights circling a city was naturally considered to be on a spy mission. Many of these machines were fired at, some were seen to crash, others continued their apparently aimless wanderings in the sky, but nothing as concrete as wreckage or a captured airman was ever produced.

The parallels to modern UFO sightings are many, and doubtless many of these early sightings were the results of war hysteria, including the misinterpretation of planets, fireballs, auroral lights and mirages. There remains, though, an element of strangeness in these early reports. Most of the objects were quite unlike modern-day UFOs; they flew very slowly, many carried searchlights, others were seen and followed during daylight, and in some cases conversations were held with the occupants.

Balloons, zeppelins and airplanes were the most frequent visitors, while the Scandinavian ghost rockets and the foo fighters of WWII form a bridge between these early sightings and those of Kenneth Arnold in 1947. We have to wonder if these aerial sightings reflected the social and political conditions of the time, shaped by the general awareness of what was technologically possible.

This booklet is an excellent introduction to those early phantoms of the skies. The price is right and the material is good. Get a copy.

I believe in the imagination. What I cannot see is infinitely more important than what I can see.  
-- Duane Michals, *Real Dreams*

**You're NOT coming to FortFest 88?  
Change your mind on page 24!**

A-896-97

## Media Hoaxes

by Fred Fedler

Ames: Iowa State University Press,  
1989, 266 pp., hardback, \$27.95.

Reviewed by Douglas Chapman

If one can cope with Fred Fedler's monotonous writing style, his book *Media Hoaxes* should prove a rewarding grab-bag of fascinating hoaxes from throughout the history of journalism.

Some of the greatest names in literature have turned out amazing outrages. Both Jonathan Swift and Benjamin Franklin put out works which predicted the demises of specific almanac publishers. After the publishers' reported "deaths," Swift and Franklin explained the protests of their "deceased" victims as being those of inept impostors.

Edgar Allan Poe's "factual" story "The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall" detailed a man's travel to the moon by balloon. In 1835, it fooled many; now it is one of his most famous fictions. Even Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" was originally published in *The American Review* in 1845 as if it might be fact. (One could not get Poe to admit one way or the other.)

Fedler does a good job at recreating the rough-and-ready world of 19th century American journalism. With limited news sources, facts did not always stand in the way of a good story. Mark Twain learned various skills in this environment—including practical jokes. Twain once put together an issue of the Virginia City newspaper *Enterprise*, consisting largely of libel of important people, printed only one copy, and sent it to his vacationing boss. That got the man to return to work—in a hurry.

Many know of the Orson Welles "Martian scare" of 1938. Fewer are aware of South American attempts to emulate him. When a station in Santiago, Chile, put out their radio adaptation of *War of the Worlds* in 1944, many were injured. When, in 1949, Station HCQRX in Quito, Ecuador, broadcast their version as a "real" news story about a Martian invasion, panic again resulted. Rioters soon set HCQRX's building afire, and rescuers discovered 20 corpses in the ruins.

Strange readers may be interested in the account of the "Winsted wild man," which Fedler says was the creation of Lou Stone, a New England journalist famous for his whimsical stories. In the next issue of *Strange Magazine*, Michael T. Shoemaker will take a detailed look at this case in his column *Back From Limbo*.

Fedler writes that our present standards of journalistic accountability are a development of this century and that

1.991

STRANGE MAGAZINE #7

### The 1897 Airship

Sir,—With respect to Jerome Clark, I suggest that the 1897 "airship" was probably a UFO of the kind for which the designation "Déjàvolant" has been coined in recent years. Most of the anomalies in published accounts of the time are explicable as errors arising out of the preconceptions of witnesses whose only acquaintance with flying machines rested upon the fictions of such as Jules Verne.

The "contactee" narratives centred around the 1897 craft are not more confusing or contradictory than those which afflict us today. Perhaps the UFO-denizens have some method of inducing hallucinatory experiences in the minds of terrestrials who approach a grounded UFO too closely. Furthermore, it must be assumed that publicity-hounds, "nuts" and seekers after the easy-money-that-cometh-by-a-colourful-hoax, were, then as now, quickly in the field.

I am inclined to place Captain James Hooton in one of these latter categories. The object which decorates the cover of your July-August issue looks like the result of a working collaboration between Heath Robinson and Dr. Strabismus of Utrecht. (Whom God Preserve)! I would question the ability of the UFO-denizens or anyone else to coax such an aerodynamic outrage off the ground, much less fly it all over the United States.

—J. Cleary-Baker, Weeke, Winchester.

[Dr. Cleary-Baker is editor of BUEFORA JOURNAL.]

C DARNAUD

FSR, Vol. 12, No 6, Nov - Dec 1966

A major study of the 1896-97 "mystery airship" reports in the U.S., by Robert G. Neeley, Jr., is in an advanced stage and is expected to be released in 1986. Research support from the Fund enabled Mr. Neeley to travel extensively throughout the U.S. to visit major libraries and depository sites and to obtain a large amount of new information, despite the fact that several other people have already conducted fairly comprehensive research on this topic. The resulting catalogue and analysis should be the most definitive study yet conducted of what might be called the first wave of UFO sightings in the U.S. If, in fact, there is a conventional explanation for the reports, the information compiled by Mr. Neeley will be an important factor in resolving the question.

M, Mx-82

### WORLD SCOPE

In parallel with the U.S. study, the Fund has recently approved a grant to a team of British investigators to compile and analyze data on "mystery aircraft" reports in the British Isles early in the 20th Century. This study also set



(our italics): "What is thought to have been the mysterious airship was seen [at Mount Vernon] by more than a hundred persons. It was first observed about 8.30 o'clock and continued in sight for half an hour. Mayor Wells, who had an excellent view of the mysterious visitor from the observatory attached to his residence, says it resembled *the body of a huge man swimming through the air with an electric light at his back.*"†

Airships appeared at Pittsford, Clayton, and Ann Arbor (all in Michigan) the same evening. At Cadmus, one excitable soul shot at the object, thinking it was a flying dragon.

Three night men employed by the Wallin Leather Company in Grand Rapids reported seeing a bright white light in the western sky. They watched it at intervals over a three-and-a-half hour period, until it disappeared in the north at 3 a.m. on the 17th.

#### An 1897 "message"

Later in the morning, at 6.15, on his way to work, Mr. C. T. Smith stumbled upon something on the sidewalk. Upon examination it proved to be an envelope on which someone had written "From the Airship Travellers." Inside was a letter, "written," related a news story, "on note paper with a purple indellible [sic] pencil, . . . attached to a piece of stiff wire about five inches long, at the other end of which was fastened, as a weight, one of the iron combination stoppers and bottle openers commonly used to open beer bottles."

The message read:

To whoever finds this. 2,500 feet above the level of the sea, headed north at this writing, testing the airship. afraid we are lost. we are unable to control our engine. please notify our people. think we are somewhere over Michigan.

Arthur B. Coats, Laurel, Miss.  
C. C. Harris, Gulport, Miss.  
C. W. Rich, Richburg, Miss.

April 16th, '97. 9 p.m.

An unidentified flying object flew over Three Rivers that night.

In another incident involving airships and railroads, persons at Grant Station in Bailey reported watching a

huge object, about 200 feet in length, flying above the northbound evening train. The phenomenon seemed to be about a mile above the earth.

The next afternoon, a strange explosion rocked the village of Saline. Upon hearing the sound, workers just north of town had their attention attracted to a large dark object moving rapidly westward against a strong wind.

Between 8 and 9 p.m. an airship passed over Saginaw at a fast rate of speed, heading in a northerly direction. At Manistique, citizens viewed the craft travelling westward. C. R. Orr, a witness, estimated its speed at 1,000 m.p.h.—which certainly sounds extravagant, considering the relatively slow speeds other observers in other cases had reported. At any rate, the construction resembled, the Sault Ste. Marie News said, "a Washington cigar with a bright light in the centre of it."

Shortly after midnight, a railroad fireman named Widosky left the village of Wakefield and began walking back to his home in Thomaston. He happened to be looking down as he stepped over a mud puddle—and there he saw reflected the swaying lights of something above him. Glancing upward, he caught sight of three lights—red, green, and white—soaring across the sky with an odd undulating motion. The next morning, when he told friends, they laughingly suggested he had taken his first drink. (Mr. Widosky did not indulge.) To back up his story, he saw to it that the next night he had six potential witnesses with him, and, just after midnight, they all observed lights identical to those Widosky had seen 24 hours earlier.

An airship with a light at each end flew over Jackson on the evening of the 21st. The following night, at 11, two men of Hemlock watched an aircraft sailing southward "at a fearful rate of speed."

[This article will be concluded in our next issue]

#### NOTE

† "I'd like to know what Mr. W. H. Smith saw. Sept. 18, 1877, in the sky, moving over the city of Brooklyn. It looked like a winged human form (New York Sun, Sept. 21, 1877)." Charles Fort, Lo! Ch. 12.

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## THE HUMANOIDS

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Vol N<sup>o</sup>  
FSR 14-G  
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More on That 1897 Airship

Editor's Note: As our readers have indicated a great deal of interest in "that mysterious 1897 airship", we will continue to publish old newspaper accounts, as they are sent in by our readers. Please send us yours (will return if you request).

THE WILMINGTON MESSENGER  
April 6, 1897

WAS IT AN AIR SHIP?

A Remarkable Object Floats  
Over Wilmington

Hundreds of People See It - It Was Brilliantly  
Lighted and Moved West - Looked Like It had  
Rigging - Seen in Cities Out West

Hundreds of people were out on the streets and wharves last night, looking at a brilliant floating mass in the heavens to the west of the city. It was moving very rapidly, and many persons saw net-work about the aerial wonder. Some of our very best and most reliable citizens saw so much of the heavenly stranger that they had not the slightest doubt but that it was the airship which has been reported from other cities. The ship moved to the west at a rapid rate. It seemed to have something like a search-light facing earthwards, and created a sensation among all classes of people.

The ship appeared to come from the ocean and passed opposite to Market street dock, going in the direction of the Navassa guano works. Some gentlemen who saw the ship through field glasses inform us that they could see wires and ropes and rigging about it. To the naked eye many colored lights were visible. Even those who looked at it without glasses admit of no doubt but that it was an airship.  
Credit: Angelo Capparella III

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If You See a UFO. . .

The December 1971 issue of SENTINEL includes an interesting article on "What To Do If You See a UFO" and is well worth reading--and especially by the amateur investigator who can profit from the advice given--how to distinguish between a planet and a UFO; how to recognize a weather balloon; tips on photographing a UFO; and some good advice for the close-up confrontation with a space craft and/or occupants.

SENTINEL is published by Aerial Research Systems, P. O. Box 715, Banning, Calif., 92220 and is edited by F. M. Castor. This monthly ufozine is \$4.50 per year. We don't believe this magazine has ever missed a publication date, and we consider that a real "plus" in these days of the many now-and-then publications which are too often "then" and not enough "now."

S, F-72

BEFORE - Pre-1947 Sightings from the Files of Lucius Farish

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From the May 1946 issue of AMAZING STORIES, letters-to-the-editor column:quote--

In 1942 I was on a little island outpost off our Southern coast. While on duty at the OP one clear, moonless night, I saw a brightly glowing, unidentified object, like a flare in appearance, travelling horizontally over the sea at moderate speed; I can't even guess at its height, its distance from the OP, or its size.

Possibly thirty seconds or a minute after my first glimpse of it, the object ~~plummeted straight down toward the water~~ and disappeared. I watched the area where it had vanished, and a couple of minutes later it reappeared, rising swiftly in apparently an absolutely vertical line until it was out of sight.

Last winter, when I was with an anti-aircraft battery in Germany I witnessed a recurrence of the incident, with the exception that before the object dove toward the ground, it shot to and fro, short dashes in various directions; the impression that came to my mind was that its erratic movements suggested a search.

At neither occurrence were there any planes in the vicinity, nor do I know of any aircraft capable of such a performance. Furthermore, I make no claim for this yarn, and I have no witnesses; make what you will of it. (Signed) Sgt. Dirk Wylie.

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Friedman says

## Jacobs' history of Ufology well done

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Stanton T. Friedman is a nuclear physicist and renowned lecturer and investigator in the UFO field. He was one of 12 scientists who provided testimony on the UFO enigma to the Committee on Science and Astronautics, House of Representatives, on July 29, 1968.

By Stanton T. Friedman

"THE UFO CONTROVERSY IN AMERICA," by Dr. David M. Jacobs (Indiana University Press, \$12.50) is a fascinating volume--a much-revised version of the author's PhD thesis in history at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. It is probably the best overall view of "ufology" in the United States ever written. The period between 1896 and 1974 is well covered from an historical viewpoint.

Jacobs has examined a great deal of material, especially concerning the role of the U.S. Air Force and the private UFO groups such as the National Investigation Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) and the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO). His is the disinterested third party, objective view. There are more than 50 pages of references and notes, along with an index, and the approach is scholarly.

The author has provided the best description I have seen of the attitudes of a number of older scientists who have become embroiled in the UFO controversy: Dr. James E. McDonald, Dr. Donald Menzel, Dr. Edward U. Condon and Dr. J. Allen Hynek. Also portrayed in some depth are a number of non-scientists like Donald Keyhoe who spent so much effort attacking the Air Force for its secrecy on UFOs, along with the writers for the NEW YORK TIMES and other newspapers who devoted so much time attacking the people who accept UFO

reality.

Certainly neither the scientists nor the journalists are portrayed as the objective truth seekers that both groups would have the public believe they are--and which a careful study indicates they are not.

Jacobs, along the way destroys the myth of the high quality investigative efforts of Project Blue Book.

The 1896-97 wave of sightings of powered airships is presented in depth as a yet-to-be-solved mystery. The descriptions of the objects and their behavior were not a clear chronicling of flying saucers but rather the pronouncements from on high by newsmen and scientists 78 years ago--and sound much like those of our time. Prejudice and character defamation were evidenced far more frequently than objective truth seeking. Technology may change, but the nature of man does not.

Since Jacobs was a graduate student in history when much of this volume was written, it is not surprising that he doesn't dig into such areas as the feasibility of interstellar travel to any degree and that he seems naively to accept the notion that Project Blue Book was the only Air Force organization investigating UFOs.

Considering Blue Book's totally inadequate capability for obtaining data about flying craft as compared with, for example, the Aerospace Defense Command with its 35,000 members, its huge radar net, closed communication and computerized data evaluation systems, Blue Book was much more likely an unwitting cover than the major focus for high quality technical data on UFOs.

Jacobs also has the annoying habit of talking about data

sources without presenting much of the data itself. One example is Project Blue Book Special Report 14, a vital document done for the Air Force in 1955 and containing more data about UFO sightings than all other Air Force documents combined.

The reader would have benefited from the knowledge that 19.7 per cent of the 2,199 sightings investigated were listed as "unknowns"--completely separate from the "insufficient data" cases--and that the better the quality of the sightings the MORE likely they were to have been listed as "unknowns." Also, that the statistical comparison of the characteristics of the "unknowns" versus the "knowns" clearly showed that the two groups were totally dissimilar.

Jacobs mentions the Gallup Poll of 1973, which showed that 51 per cent of adult Americans believe in UFOs. He didn't mention that the greater the education of the individual, and the younger he is, the more likely he is to believe in UFOs. In both cases the data would have helped the reader make his own evaluation of the rhetoric of the skeptical scientists and journalists.

There are a number of minor inaccuracies, including such trivia as the dates of the excellent Dick Cavett show on UFOs (No. 2, 1973) and of the famous Coyne helicopter case (Oct. 18, 1973) over Mansfield, Ohio. Jacobs is wrong about the composition of both the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Committee on UFOs and the group which appeared on the Today show. But overall Jacobs' work is an excellent source book and required reading for any serious layman or Ufologist.

S, 0-75

an hour before it landed. When it landed, they gathered around and suffered from the heat.

(H) "A strange man, if man he might be called, was in charge of the ship. He had plenty of clothes but seemed to have no use for them. He was almost naked and suffered from the heat.

"He is judged to be 10 feet tall and his talk, while musical, seems to be a kind of bellowing. One of the braver farmers approached the bellowing being and got a kick that will last him for some time, as his hip was broken.

"Great excitement prevails here. Lots of people are flocking here from Okemos and Locke to view the strange being from a safe distance. No one cares to go near. He seems to be trying to talk to everyone. The people...who have not seen him refuse to believe, although six of the best people swear it is the truth. At 8:10 last evening the ship passed over the village and many people watched its flight. The being returned to the vessel and flew away."

At Sisterville, W. Va., a quiet little town on the Ohio river, a luminous red object sailed in from the northwest at about 9 p.m. on April 19. It flashed brilliant searchlights and immediately began throwing the village in havoc. The sawmill whistle was blowing frantically as hundreds clogged into the streets to glimpse at the fantastic aerial visitor. The craft was like an immense cigar with two protruding fins on either side. Observers estimated it to have been about 180 feet in length and about 50 feet in diameter. All of the witnesses were able to make out flashing red, white and green lights along the side and at the stern.

That same night in Atlanta, Texas, a farmer named Jim Nelson had his hair "stand out with fright" when an airship slowly descended and momentarily hovered above him.

But perhaps the most amazing account is the startling experience of Captain Jim Hooten, a well-known Iron Mountain railroad conductor whose story appeared in the April 22, 1897, issue of *The Arkansas Gazette*, Little Rock. Capt. Hooten had been out hunting near Homan when it became dark: "I started to make my way back to the railroad station. As I was tramping through the brush my

attention was attracted by a familiar sound, like the noise of a locomotive airpump." SAUCER NEWS, SPRING 1970

Suddenly he came upon five men repairing an odd-looking machine. "There was a medium-sized man who wore smoked glasses," said Hooten. "I mentioned the noise sounded like a Westinghouse air brake. 'Perhaps it does my friend,' he replied. 'We are using condensed air...but you will know more later on.'" 1897

Capt. Hooten said the front of the ship ended in an abrupt knife-like edge. He recalled, "The sides of the craft bulged gradually, then receded. There were three large wheels upon each side...arranged so that they became concave as they moved forward...The man said good-bye, the ship rose with a hissing sound...in less than the twinkle of an eye the ship disappeared from sight."

The April 23rd issue of *The Modern News*, Harrisburg, Ark., carried the report of an ex-Senator Harris who also encountered some airship pilots when the vessel landed near his home. The crew consisted of an old, bearded man, a woman, and two young men. Harris was told by his informants that someone long ago had learned how to overcome gravity. The elderly man said he was able to secure the plans and experimented with the airship. They were scheduled to visit the planet Mars before putting the ship on public tour.

Harris declined to take a ride aboard the craft, and seconds later it rose swiftly into the sky.

Daniel Gray, a farmer living near Flint, Mich., was working in his field on April 23 when he heard "a terrible rumbling and whizzing sound directly over his head." Gazing upward, Gray was astonished to see a dark object traversing the sky at a high rate of speed. He was puzzled and rather dazed, but suddenly noticed a newspaper dropping from out of the sky. Upon examining it, he saw the newspaper came from Toronto, Canada, dated Oct. 5, 1896. The paper was dry and very well preserved.

*The Daily Texarkanian*, Texarkana, Ark., published on the same date as the above happenings, gave the account of Judge Lawrence A. Bryne's face-to-face encounter with oriental-like beings aboard an object

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which was anchored near the McKinney Bayou. The three men spoke in a strange language and had distinctive features like that of someone from the Far East. They motioned for Bryne to join them, to his astonishment.

The machinery was made of aluminum and the gas to raise and lower the ship was pumped into an aluminum tank," recalled Bryne.

*The Houston Daily Post* of April 28, contained a most interesting account:

"Merkel, Texas, April 26—Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a rope attached. They followed it until in crossing the railroad it caught on a rail. On looking up, they saw what they supposed was the airship. It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several windows, and there was a bright light in front like a headlight of a locomotive. After some 10 minutes, a man was seen descending the rope. He came near enough to be plainly seen. He wore a light blue sailor suit, and was small in size. He stopped when he discovered the parties at the anchor, and cut the rope below him and sailed off in a northeast direction. The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliott and Miller, and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people."

(continued on inside back cover)

# THE STRANGE B.I.C.R. AFFAIR

Dr. Richard H. Pratt

Science Consultant, SAUCER NEWS

I had no idea last spring that, after I wrote an article for *Saucer News* on the possibility of flying saucers being "time machines," I would stumble upon actual evidence for my claim. However, that is exactly what happened, and I am now so shaken by the implications that it may be difficult to relate the events as they occurred. But I shall try.

After the article appeared (Spring-Summer, 1969), Gray Barker relayed a letter to me from a Mrs. W.R. of a large Massachusetts city. Mrs. R., a UFO hobbyist, related that her husband—an avid investigator who is also an electrical engineer—answered an announcement about a new UFO club which had appeared in Ray Palmer's *Flying Saucers* magazine in early 1969.

Mrs. R., fearing I wasn't a subscriber (lucky, since I am not), typed the announcement as it appeared in that issue. But she didn't specify which month's copy it was, and I have since been unable to locate the actual item. However, as she said, it read in part:

"This year will be hailed in Ufological circles as that in which the disparaging elements of Ufology—the occult groups, contactees, psychotics, the money-hungry—began to vanish. It will also be the year in which a new institution was formed to study the Ufo problem in a scientific and precise

manner.

"If you're an intelligent individual, we need your help; but you must write us as soon as you can, as there will be a waiting list. You will complete a questionnaire and undergo a check of your background before you can be accepted."

This ended with an address for correspondence. Called the BICR (the full name was not given), the group was headed by three men, William A. Gautier, Thomas Harper and R. James Kipling.

After Mr. R. contacted the group he received a letter and questionnaire. He was struck by the letter's change of attitude. Unlike the announcement, this now stressed "the formation of a serious, scientific organization composed of intelligent, trained adults from all countries." The publicized attempt to get rid of occult groups, etc., was now labeled as the group's "secondary purpose."

Even so, Mr. R. was engrossed with the idea, and sent the requested dues with the completed questionnaire to the Michigan address. He had noticed that, on the questionnaire, the group displayed an unusual interest in education and scientific training. He received another letter congratulating him on his acceptance, and now the leaders wanted to have an interview with him.

Mr. R. was surprised by the request, since he thought the group was in

Michigan; however, he found his letters had been forwarded to the actual headquarters, miles away in Worcester, Massachusetts! He therefore reported to the new address in the second letter. Mrs. R. did not tell me this address.

When her husband returned home, Mrs. R. said he was "excited and exuberant" over something which he refused to discuss with her. He said she would be told everything when "it was all right."

All this happened in May. For two months, Mr. R.'s spare time was spent at work either away from home in Worcester, or shut up in his private study until early morning hours. Then, one Sunday afternoon he returned from Worcester in an irate mood. He said the group had disbanded, and the leaders had "stolen" their work.

At first he didn't want to say more, but after an argument with his wife he said he and twelve others had repaired a "temporal transmitter" under the direction of Gautier, Kipling and Harper. The three claimed they had built the device under a federal grant, but the first trial had damaged it. They had needed immediate help from scientifically trained personnel, and had brought them together in a variety of different ways, one of which was the announcement in *FLYING SAUCERS*.

# Debris may be from 1897 UFO

## Metal found at crash site has unusual properties

By John F. Schuessler  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS WORLD

Did a cigar-shaped unidentified flying object really crash near Aurora, Texas, on April 19, 1897? Some people believe the whole story was a fabrication by S.E. Hayden, a local cotton buyer; while others are reasonably sure the tragic accident really occurred.

Investigators for the mutual UFO Network, headquartered in Seguin, Texas, have uncovered evidence that raises doubts about the hoax theory.

Sightings of strange airships were

Sightings of strange airships were reported all across the United States during the spring of 1897. The Aurora incident was just another UFO sighting; but with an unusual twist. It resulted in the allegation that an object crashed and left debris as proof of the event.

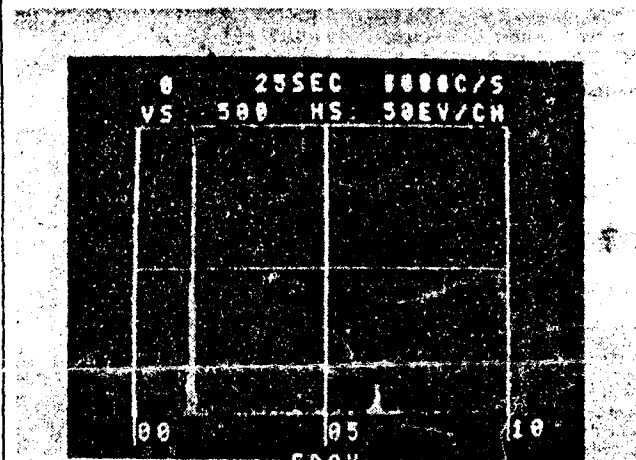
reported all across the United States during the spring of 1897. The Aurora incident was just another UFO sighting; but with an unusual twist. It resulted in the allegation that an object crashed and left debris as proof of the event.

### Kin of witnesses remember

Bill Case, a state director for the Mutual UFO Network, discovered family members of the original witnesses were ready to tell what happened that memorable day. Mrs. Mary Evans, about 15 years old at the time, said her mother and father went to the crash site and told her how the airship had exploded and that the pilot was torn up and killed in the crash. He was a small man and was buried later that day in the local cemetery by the men of the town.

Jim Stephens told his son Charlie how the nose of the airship hit the windlass over the water well on Judge J.S. Proctor's farm causing a chain reaction explosion. The flash followed by a fire was visible for more than three miles.

Investigators have reconstructed the events of the sighting and located the crash site. Using sophisticated metal detecting equipment and guided by the eyewitness accounts they retrieved pieces of metal of various size and types. Bill Case said



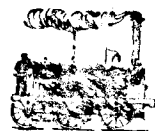
(TOP AND ON THE COVER) Photograph of a metal sample found 100 feet west of the alleged 1897 UFO crash site in Aurora, Texas. (ABOVE) Electron dispersion x-ray analyzer finds only aluminum and iron in the sample, an anomaly because most terrestrial aluminum contains copper.

"from all indications there was definitely an explosion. The pattern established by metals recovered indicates the craft exploded on the lower right side first blowing bits and pieces over a two or three acre area east and northeast of the well site on top of a rocky limestone hill. Immediately, the rest of the craft exploded throwing other samples to the north and west."

Although it is difficult to deter-

mine which samples may have resulted from the crash, as compared with debris left by people living on the farm during the past three-quarters of a century, some of the samples were unique.

One piece, thought to be a structural member of some kind, was analyzed by a major U.S. laboratory with exciting results. An electron dispersion x-ray analyzer was used to iden-



tify the elements found in the sample. Only aluminum with a trace of iron could be detected.

The sample was retrieved from a location about 100 feet west of the well site beneath four inches of soil. It was lodged directly against the face of the limestone rock and conformed to the exact configuration of the stone, indicating it was in a near molten state when it penetrated the earth and hit the rock where it cooled.

Investigators have reconstructed the events of the sighting and located the crash site. Using sophisticated metal detecting equipment and guided by the eyewitness accounts they retrieved pieces of metal of various size and types. Bill Case said "from all indications there was definitely an explosion..."

X-ray fluorescence analysis determined the sample to be free of zinc. This was an unexpected finding, since the samples retrieved from the east of the well site contained zinc. The soft x-ray spectrographic analysis verified the high purity of the aluminum, the inclusion of iron, and the absence of copper. This also is an anomaly, because commercial aluminum alloys that contain iron usually contain copper.

Photomicrographs of the sample shows the presence of large grains, indicating the sample is stress-free and has gone through a melting and cooling stage. Details of the analysis provide additional clues as to how the material was constructed, the nature of the crystalline structure, and unusual purity. All this is consistent with the allegation that an object exploded spewing debris in all directions, impacting with a tremendous force.

Investigators were able to locate a crude headstone marking a grave in the local cemetery. Metal detecting equipment gave the same readings at the gravesite as they did where the metal was found. The marker and the detector readings seemed to be sufficient for investigators to demand the opening of the grave and exhumation of the pilot's body. Local citizens didn't agree. They blocked opening of the grave. Soon thereafter the headstone was removed and the grave left unmarked and anonymous.

Perhaps the people of Aurora were afraid their longstanding popularity would be diminished if the grave were opened and science proved the whole event was a hoax. On the other hand, what if the grave did hold the remains of an alien pilot? At this time the investigators' files hold sufficient evidence to cast reasonable doubt on the hoax theory.

## Strange light may have been a UFO, Ketchumite reports

By SUSAN WHALEY  
Wood River Journal

thought initially that the light, about the size of a...

it had come from, Pennay said.



1896-97

GdM 150 — 11

ENERO -84

Marcello Coppetti

Ufologia e strategia

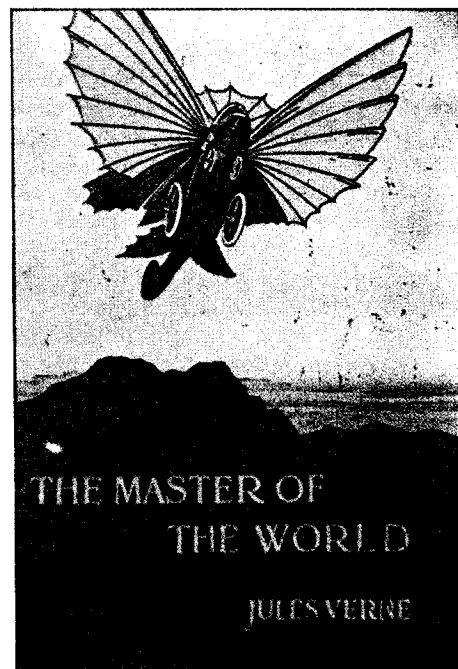
# Gli «Airship»

**Guerra radiofonica e guerra elettronica - Uno strano fenomeno riscontrato durante la prima guerra mondiale**

**G**li ufologi che hanno indagato su questo misterioso fenomeno prima del 1947 si sono imbattuti negli «airship», vocabolo inglese che significa astronave. È noto che con questo nome viene genericamente indicato il misterioso (ma poi non troppo, come vedremo) quanto inafferrabile aeromobile avvistato negli Stati Uniti dal novembre 1896 al maggio 1897 e, soprattutto, nell'aprile di quest'ultimo anno. Altre osservazioni di «airship» avvennero nel 1908 in Danimarca e negli Stati Uniti; nel 1909 in Nuova Zelanda, negli Stati Uniti e in Inghilterra; nel 1913, infine, ancora in Inghilterra e negli Stati Uniti. Ho già trattato di questo fenomeno sul GdM n° 113. In quell'articolo concludevo, senza che nessuno mi abbia smentito, con questa frase: «... si ha la netta sensazione che gli oggetti volanti non identificati visti in quegli anni siano macchine terrestri (palloni e dirigibili) e che dietro il fenomeno vi siano i servizi segreti per usarlo come copertura delle nuove scoperte del volo umano e per strumentalizzarlo psicologicamente». A supporto di questa teoria citavo alcuni episodi avvenuti in Inghilterra riguardanti appunto operazioni di spionaggio germanico con dirigibili normali e «tascabili» alcuni dei quali erano anche atterrati. Chi desidera approfondire può rileggere quell'articolo del 1980.

Ma gli «airship», soprattutto quelli avvistati sull'Inghilterra nel 1913 (pochi sanno, però, che misteriosi aeromobili del tipo degli «airship» furono visti in quell'anno anche nei cieli tedeschi), sono, come vedremo, legati agli inizi della «guerra elettronica» («G.E.») anche se è improprio usare questo termine per quel periodo poiché, allora, si trattava di «guerra radiofonica», cioè intercettazione di messaggi in chiaro e in codice trasmessi via radio e disturbo dalla parte avversaria degli apparati di intercettazione, cioè far sentire poco e male o addirittura niente a chi ascoltava sulle diverse frequenze usate dagli alti comandi militari o dagli agenti «sul campo», cioè dalle spie.

L'italiano professor Alessandro Artom



Nel celebre libro di Verne «Il padrone del mondo» viene descritta una nave spaziale assai simile agli «airship» del 1896-97.

aveva inventato un sistema radiogoniometrico dopo aver scoperto l'effetto direzionale di un'antenna a telaio, cioè la capacità che tale tipo di antenna ha di individuare la direzione di provenienza di un'emissione elettromagnetica. Guglielmo Marconi che, dopo l'invenzione della radio, si era trasferito in Inghilterra per le incomprensioni che trovava in Italia, perfezionò la scoperta di Artom. Il radiogoniometro di Marconi riusciva a captare segnali debolissimi, ricercava ed intercettava le diverse emissioni elettromagnetiche individuandone la direzione di provenienza e, quindi, mediante triangolazioni, riusciva a trovare la posizione esatta delle stazioni emittenti. Così il radiogoniometro diventò lo strumento a doppio uso dei servizi d'informazione: serviva al controspionaggio per trovare gli esatti luoghi da dove le spie trasmettevano e serviva allo spionaggio perché, localizzando una stazione emittente dal territorio avversario, che coincideva quasi sempre con la radio di un alto comando militare, significava individuare la località dove si trovava lo stesso co-

## THE GREAT AIRSHIP SCARE (continued from page 9)

We must also recall the testimony of Deputy Sheriff John McLemore and Constable John J. Sumpter of Hot Springs, Arkansas who met the occupants of a flying ship on May 13, 1897. An affidavit followed and here is some of that statement:

"While riding northwest from Hot Springs on the night of May 6, 1897, we noticed a bright light high in the heavens. About a hundred yards ahead we saw two persons moving around with lights. Drawing our Winchesters, we demanded: 'Who is that, and what are you doing here?'"

"A man with a dark beard stepped forward and said he and the young woman were traveling through the country in an airship. We could see the outlines of the ship, which was around sixty feet long and cigar-shaped. It was dark and raining and a young man was filling a big sack with water. The woman was careful to keep back in the dark."

The two laymen were offered a free ride in order to get out of the rain, but they declined. The bearded man said he was going to Nashville, Tenn., after seeing the country. Unfortunately, the witnesses left before the ship ascended into the air since they were hurrying to get home.

The airships finally vanished after May, although there were a few reported sightings in 1898 and some activity continuing into 1905. Were they new-fangled contraptions built by some ingenious party of inventors?

It seems unlikely. Did the pilots want us to believe this in order to conceal their real identity and purpose? The angry, bellowing giant in Williamston, Mich.; the strange, oriental men near the McKinney Bayou in Arkansas; and the "little man" seen in Merkel, Texas, all seem to tally with modern-day reports of UFO occupants.

These reports were well documented; they are representative of a large amount of datum, and were published in both the lay and scientific presses.

Through a close scrutiny of the sightings in this period, perhaps we can arrive at some conclusive answers which still awaits us in the mystery of the UFO.

mando. Così, trovando tutte le stazioni radio, lo spionaggio aveva il quadro completo e abbastanza preciso della linea del fronte nemico.

Con quel tipo di radiogoniometro si poteva già riconoscere se la stazione che emetteva, ora da una località ora da un'altra, era la stessa oppure no. Cosicché, se era la stessa, seguendo lo spostamento delle emissioni o tracciando su una carta topografica questi spostamenti, era possibile conoscere i movimenti delle truppe nemiche.

Ciò rese edotti tutti i Servizi d'informazione della necessità di trovare metodi di disturbo e dette un enorme impulso alla tecnica di costruzione di apparati radio, radiogoniometri e accessori sempre più sofisticati e soprattutto di dimensioni tali da essere messi in valige da viaggio molto ridotte (tipo gli attuali «24 ore») e inseriti nei palloni e nei dirigibili.

Quando i tedeschi capirono (fine del 1912) che una guerra con l'Inghilterra sarebbe stata inevitabile e a vicina scadenza decisero che un'operazione necessaria era quella di bombardare Londra con gli «Zeppelin». Iniziarono così nel 1913 con palloni e dirigibili operazioni di ricognizione sull'Isola. I motivi principali erano: risolvere il problema della navigazione per raggiungere l'obiettivo di notte, tenendo conto che, in tempo di guerra, le città sarebbero state completamente oscurate; cercare di ottenere con i radiogoniometri installati sui palloni e sui dirigibili la intercettazione delle radio militari usate dall'Inghilterra verso la Germania e viceversa.

Fu perfezionando questo sistema di intercettazione che i tedeschi risolsero il problema della navigazione notturna. Usando le stazioni radiogoniometriche a terra in Germania e quelle in volo, si accorsero che la navigazione astronomica (impossibile ovviamente quando c'erano nuvole o nebbia) poteva essere so-

stituita con i radiogoniometri, ma purtroppo sorse un nuovo problema. La guida a grande distanza non dava rilevamenti precisi o comunque tali da garantire un effettivo arrivo dei dirigibili sugli obiettivi da bombardare.

Si rese così necessario l'invio di agenti segreti tedeschi in Inghilterra che vi giunsero con ogni mezzo, anche atterrando con palloni (soprattutto poi quando scoppiò la guerra). Ognuno di loro aveva un apparato radiogoniometrico di quelli a misure ridotte. Comunque dovevano essere riforniti ogni tanto, sia di denaro, di pezzi di ricambio e per scambiarsi messaggi in codice con i quali lo stato maggiore tedesco chiedeva informazioni e gli agenti gliele inviavano.

Quando scoppiò la guerra il sistema escogitato dai tedeschi (che si erano sistemati in una villa alla periferia di Londra) funzionò a meraviglia. Infatti, prima dell'inizio del conflitto, durante i voli notturni di ricognizione dei dirigibili «Zeppelin» sulla capitale inglese, gli agenti li rilevavano via radio (cioè per mezzo di un trasmettitore installato a bordo del dirigibile) e quindi, emettendo un segnale che veniva captato dai ricevitori sugli «Zeppelin» riuscivano a guidarli con sufficiente precisione sugli obiettivi da colpire.

L'espedito funzionò per qualche tempo dopo l'inizio della guerra ma poi, quando la sorveglianza aumentò anche nel settore delle emissioni elettromagnetiche e soprattutto il controspionaggio inglese si accorse che le trasmissioni da Londra aumentavano prima dei bombardamenti, capirono che i due fatti (trasmissioni radio e bombardamenti) erano strettamente connessi.

Fu abbastanza facile per il controspionaggio individuare da dove gli agenti tedeschi guidavano i dirigibili e ciò grazie al radiogoniometro perfezionato da Marconi sfruttando il metodo ideato dal

prof. Artom. Infatti i dirigibili trasmettevano sempre sulla medesima frequenza.

Eppure una volta individuati gli agenti, le stazioni tedesche non furono smantellate. Anzi il controspionaggio inglese se ne servì per mandare fuori rotta i dirigibili che, così, credevano di bombardare Londra o qualche obiettivo vitale e, invece, sganciavano le bombe in mare aperto.

Quando poi decisero che questo gioco non valeva più la candela, allora gli inglesi giocarono un tiro mancino ai tedeschi. Approntato un aeroporto di fortuna vicino alle coste del Mare del Nord vi fecero affluire una squadriglia di aerei da caccia e quando si accorsero che era in corso una grossa operazione di bombardamento fecero navigare gli «Zeppelin» ad alcune centinaia di metri dall'aeroporto da dove, nel frattempo, erano decollati i caccia. Fu una strage di dirigibili che, da allora, non furono più impiegati. Ma la necessità aguzzò l'ingegno. Nel frattempo, infatti, i tedeschi avevano subodorato che qualcosa non andava più come al solito ed avevano perfezionato un aereo, il «Gotha», che prese il posto degli «Zeppelin» mentre quest'ultimi, sempre insieme ai palloni, vennero da allora usati esclusivamente per la ricognizione.

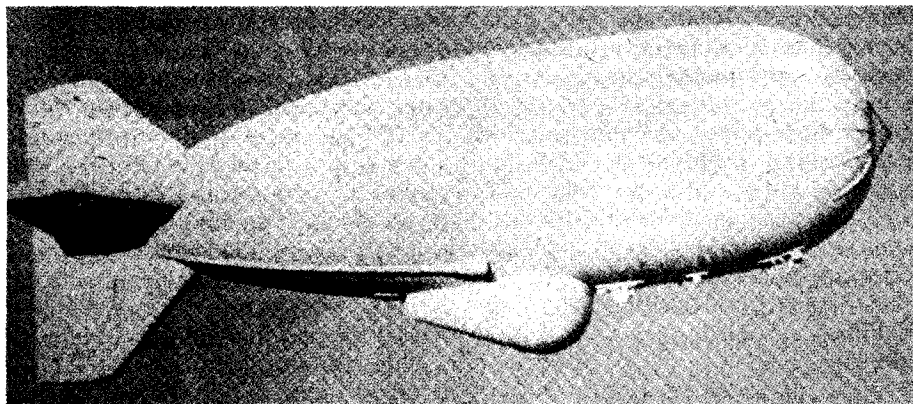
Da un esame della casistica relativa agli «airship» si ricava una interessante constatazione. La percentuale di fenomeni anomali rimasti inesplicabili risulta molto bassa. Supera di poco il 2 per cento. Si ripete così quello che è accaduto quando mi sono occupato degli RPV come possibili cause della osservazione di UFO. Come ho infatti scritto più volte sul GdM e nel mio libro «UFO: arma segreta», dopo avere accertato l'esistenza della serie degli RPV, la percentuale di presunti UFO è calata nettamente raggiungendo il 2-2,5 per cento.

Tutto questo ha un preciso ed interessante significato: sia nel periodo dei cosiddetti «airship» sia nel periodo ufologico contemporaneo la percentuale di casi che possono ritenersi UFO è identica.

Siccome il dato da me ricavato viene da un esame delle notizie riportate sugli «airship» da giornali e libri che si sono occupati dell'argomento, sarebbe veramente interessante sapere che cosa ne pensano gli «addetti ai lavori». Soprattutto, ben lieto di essere smentito su questo strano dato che si ripete e molto più lieto se qualcuno potrà inviarmi dati e notizie che confermano questo mio risultato.

Marcello Coppetti

*Alla fine del secolo XIX apparirono i primi dirigibili simili a grossi obici. In coincidenza gli Stati Uniti e l'Europa furono sorvolate da strani oggetti di origine sconosciuta.*



aise que j'ai pu trouver et **toutes les** références dont j'ai eu connaissance. Lorsqu'il y a lieu, les contradictions entre sources sont indiquées, qu'elles portent sur la localisation spatio-temporelle ou sur des détails de l'observatoir.

J'ai opté pour un classement strictement chronologique, parce qu'il est neutre vis-à-vis des hypothèses, qu'il met immédiatement en évidence d'éventuelles vagues et qu'une subdivision en types de traces aurait été passablement arbitraire (d'autant plus qu'existent des cas, certes très rares, où plus d'un type de traces ont été relevées).

Comme on le constatera, les informations dont je dispose se ramènent parfois à fort peu de choses : pour une quinzaine de cas, je n'ai strictement qu'un lieu et une date trouvés dans une liste et aucun détail sur la substance de l'observation, car je n'ai pas encore pu mettre la main sur les références mentionnées. Je serais donc très reconnaissant à tout lecteur qui, ayant accès à des sources dont je ne dispose pas, pourrait compléter ma documentation sur l'un ou l'autre cas du présent catalogue et aussi, bien entendu, porter à ma connaissance des cas de ce type qui m'auraient totalement échappé. Si ces renseignements complémentaires revêtent une certaine importance, ils pourraient faire l'objet d'un supplément au catalogue qui serait publié dans LDLN.

#### 1) **Girard (Illinois, USA), 12 avril 1897**

Le premier cas à proprement parler ufologique se situe pendant la fameuse vague d'observations "d'airships" du printemps 1897 aux Etats-Unis. A 18 heures ce jour-là, l'opérateur de nuit du télégraphe de Girard est prévenu par un collègue d'une ville voisine que l'airship venait de passer et se dirigeait vers Girard. Un quart d'heure plus tard, il voit passer le mystérieux engin, en forme de cigare et muni d'appendices latéraux, qui se rapprochait du sol. Avec trois autres personnes, il se met à suivre l'engin, qui disparaît derrière un bosquet. Avant qu'ils y parviennent, l'objet s'envole et ils peuvent apercevoir des occupants à bord. Ayant néanmoins poursuivi leur marche jusqu'au lieu d'atterrissage supposé, ils peuvent "remarquer sur le sol des empreintes de pas d'hommes. Elles ne se trouvaient pas n'importe où et il était évident qu'elles avaient été faites par les occupants de la machine qui avaient dû sauter du bord pour procéder à un probable réglage quelconque". Aucun autre détail n'étant donné sur les traces, peut-on supposer qu'il s'agissait de chaussures tout à fait normales ?

C'est Jean Sider (53) qui donne le récit le plus complet de ce cas, qui vient s'intercaler

entre d'autres observations, dont un autre atterrissage quelques kilomètres plus au sud. Comme ces différentes observations s'enchaînent logiquement, du point de vue horaire et géographique, et vu le nombre de témoins, honorablement connus, Sider conclut qu'il est difficile d'imaginer un canular.

Jacques Vallée (36, cas 15) et Ted Phillips (19, p. 3) citent également le cas, mais parlent simplement de "traces sur une grande surface".

#### 2) **Saginaw (Michigan, USA), peu avant le 1<sup>er</sup> mai 1897.**

Toujours pendant la vague de 1897, le Saginaw Evening News (journal qui a rapporté de nombreuses histoires d'airship) du 1<sup>er</sup> mai relate la découverte d'une "chaussure de proportions gigantesques" près d'une ligne de chemin de fer, cette curieuse trouvaille étant, bien entendu, supposée être tombée d'un "navire aérien" (54).

Comme il fallait s'y attendre, on ne nous précise pas ce que cette godasse est devenue... Je concède qu'il ne s'agit pas là vraiment d'une trace de pas : le seul lien (ténu) avec le sujet qui nous occupe est que cette chaussure **aurait pu** être à l'origine d'une telle trace... En outre, Jean Sider, qui est assurément le meilleur connaisseur français de la vague de 1897, m'a confié que ce cas était pour lui peu sérieux. Si j'ai néanmoins évoqué cette affaire, c'est par souci d'être le plus complet possible et aussi, avouerai-je pour introduire une note d'humour trop rare à mon sens dans la presse ufologique.

#### 3) **Monts Sikota Alin (Extrême-Orient russe), 11 juillet 1908.**

L'explorateur russe V.K. Arsenyev raconte, dans un livre publié à Vladivostok en 1947, avoir observé près de l'embouchure de la rivière Gobilli, dans cette chaîne de montagnes parallèle à la côte de la mer du Japon, "une marque sur le sentier qui était très semblable à l'empreinte de pas d'un homme". Son chien se mit à grogner et on entendit quelque chose bouger dans les buissons. Après quelques minutes d'immobilité, l'homme lança une pierre en direction de l'animal inconnu. Alors se fit entendre un battement d'ailes et une grande forme émergea du brouillard pour s'envoler par-dessus la rivière, où la brume se referma bientôt sur elle. L'explorateur ayant raconté cet incident à des habitants de la région, ceux-ci se lancèrent dans un récit animé à propos d'un homme qui pouvait voler dans les airs. Les chasseurs observaient souvent ses traces, qui apparaissaient et disparaissaient soudainement. La seule explication possible était, disaient-ils, que cet "homme" se posait sur le sol, puis s'élevait à nouveau dans l'air (55).

L, J - OCT 86

LDLN

# OHIO AIRSHIP REPORTS OF 1897

62 PAGES

## QUINCY ALLIGATOR

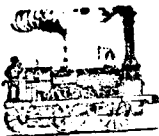
Making Things Lively About the Marsh Lately.

Saturday's Kenton Daily Democrat says: The people in the vicinity of the Scioto Marsh are in a great state of excitement because of the appearance of an alligator in a swamp near Foraker. It was first seen Wednesday by some boys who were hunting. They were badly frightened and reported their discovery. A search was made but it was not seen again until Friday. It is probable that the alligator is one that escaped from the park at Quincy a few weeks ago.

(Logan County Index, April 8)

## AIR SHIPS ARE NOW A FAD

...On April 5 people at Nashville, Illinois, saw something that some thought was a balloon, while others were sure it was a flying machine. Two days later a doctor at Vinton, Iowa, reported that he and his family heard the air ship "swishing through the air" and that he saw it flying against the wind.... and Northwood, a town near the Minneapolis state line, reported the machine in sight at 10:30 o'clock [April 8].



(Toledo Blade, April 12)

IGNACIO DARNAUDE ROJAS-MARCOS

Cabeza del Rey Don Pedro, 9 - (2.º B)  
41004 - SEVILLA (Spain)

## ANDERSON PEOPLE

Claim to Have Seen the Strange Flying Machine Recently.

...Parties in another section of the city, among them Deputy Clerk Fulton, state that they saw it early Friday morning.

(Cincinnati Enquirer, April 15)

Platte City, Mo., April 12.--The town was roused Saturday night at 10 o'clock by tinkling of bells overhead. Every one rushed out doors. Suspended in mid air was an object over 100 feet long and 20 wide. Two immense fins on either side of it moved up and down.

(Columbus Press, April 12)

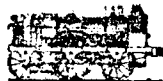
## Saw a Man In it.

SPECIAL DISPATCH TO THE ENQUIRER.

LAGRANGE, IND., April 12.--The mysterious airship which has been hovering over Chicago for the past few days was visible here early last night. It came from a westerly direction, and then, turning southwest for awhile, hovered over this section, and then turned and went toward Chicago. The powerful telescope at the How Military School, at Lima, was turned on it, and the professor in charge declares he could distinguish a figure moving about.

# "DATA-NET" JOURNAL

-7-



## 1897 "AIRSHIP" - MIDWEST CHRONOLOGY

(Compiled by J.J. Clark from research by Walt Andrus, Director, MIDWEST UFO NETWORK)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DAY/LOCAL TIME</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION (ACTION)</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
4-1	Galesburg, Mich.	Thu/2200	High flyover, voices	x	(A)
4-5	Nashville, Ill.	Mon/2000	Flyover	x	(A)
4-6	Omaha, Nebr.	Tue/2100	Maneuvered	Kiplinger, Hawks, Bearket, Hospe, Dietz, Funkhauser, Guion, Newville	(A)
4-7	Wolf Creek Township, Ia.	Wed/Nite	Landed, animal reaction	Butler	(B)
4-8	Btwn. West Liberty & Cedar Rapids, Ia.	Thu/1930	Low, paced train	x	(A)
4-8	Solon, Ia.	Thu/2030	Slow flyby	x	(A)
4-8	Belle Plaine, Ia.	Thu/2100	Maneuvered	x	(A)
4-8	Cedar Rapids, Ia.	Thu/2100	Slow oscillating flyby	x	(A)
4-8	Northwood, Ia.	Thu/2230	Slow oscillating flyby	x	(A)
4-10	Quincy, Ill.	Sat/2300	Maneuvered	x	(A)
4-11	Milwaukee, Wisc.	Sun/Daybrk	Maneuvered	x	(B)
4-11	Milwaukee, Wisc.	Sun/2100	Hovered, occupants seen	Mayer	(B)
4-11	Pavillion, Mich.	Sun/Late PM	Flyover, explosion, objects recovered	Somers, Chadburn, Wallace	(B)
4-12	Burlington, Ia.	Mon/AM	Paced train	Bullard	(B)
4-12	Bloomington, Ill.	Mon/1200	Flyover	(B)	(B)
4-12	Appleton, Wisc.	Mon/Nite	Maneuvered	Lunn	(A)
4-12	Milwood, Ill.	Mon/1500	Landed	Street, Tuples, Metcalf	(A)
4-12	Green Ridge, Ill.	Mon/Aft	Landed, occupants seen	X	(A)
4-12	Sherman, Ill.	Mon/2000	Flyby	x	(A)
4-12	Williamsville, Ill.	Mon/2045	Flyby	x	(A)
4-15	Springfield, Ill.	Thu/1200	Landed, conversed occupants	Winkle, Hull	(B)
4-15	Perry Springs, Ill.	Thu/2100	Maneuvered, paced train	Malley, Cupp, Lusk, Lawson, Peacock	(A)
4-16	Astoria, Ill.	Thu/x	Flyover, note found	Swearengen	(B)
4-26	Yates Center, Kans.	Mon/Day	Occupants see, cow missing-remains found	Hamilton, Thomas	(B)

(A): Quincy Morning Whig

(B): Quincy Daily Herald

## SIGHTING REPORT CHRONOLOGY

1964 - 1968

(Compiled by J.J. Clark from research by Jerry Johnson, WA5RON)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DAY/LOCAL TIME</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION (ACTION)</u>	<u>WITNESSES</u>	<u>(SOURCE)</u>
1964:					
4-24	Socorro, N.M.	Fri/Aft.	Landed, occupants seen	Zamorra	(A)
4-25-27	Espanola, N.M.	x	Ground marks, UFO sighted	Vigil	(A)
4-26	La Madera, N.M.	Sun/x	Landed, ground marks	x	(x)
4-30	Baker, Ca.	Thu/Day	Landed, ground marks	Biggs, Ayres	(A)
6-29	Lavonia, Ga.	Mon/x	Buzzed car, physiological effects	x	(X)
6-8	Boston, Mass.	x	Possible landing	x	(x)
9-5	Glassboro, N.J.	Sat/x	Landed, ground marks	x	(x)
12-29	Patuxent Navy Air Base, Md.	Tue/x	Flyover, radar	x	(x)
1965:					
7-	Lima, Peru	x	Landed, ground marks	x	(B)
7(?)	Warminster, Engl.	x	Hovered	x	(A)
7-3	Antartica, Argentine Navy Base	Sat/x	Maneuvered. Photo.	x	(B)
7-9	Azores Islands, Pacific	Fri/x	Hovered. E-M effect	x	(A)
7-12	Oporto, Portugal	Mon/x	Flyby	Fernandes	(B)
7-13	Wynnewood, Okla.	Tue/AM	Flyover. Radar	Sikes	(B)
7-17	Colonia & Buenos Aires, Argentina	Sat/x	Maneuvered		

- 7-31 - Hobbs, Carlsbad, Artesia, New Mex. - Sat/2020-2100 - Flyover - x - (B)  
July to Sept. - Near Mexico City, Mex. - x - Deluge of reports, many with occupants seen - x - (B)
- 8-1 - Central Okla. - Sun/2100 - Formation flight, radar - x - (A)  
8-2 - Dallas, Tex. - Mon/AM - Flyover, radar - x - (A,B)  
8-2 - Garland, Tex. - Mon/0100 - Hovered - Bostic - (B)  
8-2 - McAllen, Tex. - Mon/2145 - Formation flight, landed, recovered. Doughnut shape, silver dollar size - x - x
- 8-11 - Paris, Tex.(?) - Wed/x - Hovered, man shot at it - x - (A)  
8-31 - Warminster, Engl. - Tue/0155 - Explosion, cloud, UFO ascended from center -x-(B)  
9-3 - Exeter, New Hamp. - Fri/0200 - Hovered - x - x -  
9-16 - Pretoria, So. Afr. - Thu/2400 - Landed, ground marks - x - (B)  
10-? - New York, N.Y. - x/AM - Blackout, Hovered, "spoke" - Whitman - (A)  
12-? - No. Mexico - x - Many reports. Photo - x - (B)
- 1966:
- 3-1 - Tulsa, Okla. - Tue/x - Photo - Tinker - x  
3-20 - Ann Arbor (nr. Dexter), Mich. - Sun/2000 - Low flyby, plus formation flight - x - (A)  
3-21 - Hillsdale, Mich. - Mon/x - Landed, ground marks - x - (A)  
3-21 - Dallas, Tex. - Mon/2030-2100 - High flight - Choate - (A)  
3-22 - Trinidad, Colo. - Tue/x - Several flyby - x - x  
3-23 - Temple, Okla. - Wed/0500 - Landed, marking on side, occupant seen - Laxson, Anderson - (A,B)  
3-27 - Columbus, Ga. - Sun/0530 - Flyover, radar - x - (A)  
3-27 - Nr. New Orleans, La. - x - Explosion, pieces landed (over Army restricted area), Radar - x - (A)  
3-28 - Ann Arbor, Mich. and area - Mon/x - Many, low flight - x - (B)  
3-29 - Houston, Tex. - Tue/x - Collided with car, dents - x - (KLIF, radio)  
3-30 - Dallas, Tex. - Wed/x - Low flight, swirled water in swimming pool, overturned garbage cans - Kerpsey - (KLIF, radio)  
3-31 - Dallas, Tex. - Thu/2400-0400 - Many, maneuvered - x - (A,B)  
4-2 - Dallas, Tex. - Sat/0520 - Hovered - King - (A)  
4-4 - Dallas, Tex. - Mon/0139 - Possible landing - Charba - (A)  
4-17 - Ravenna, Ohio - Sun/AM - Car chased UFO. Photo - x - (A)  
4-25 - Florida - Mon/x - Plane chased UFO - Gov. Burns - x  
7-25 - Atlanta, Ga. - Mon/x - Several flyover - Bennet - x  
10-12 - Johnson City, Tenn. - Wed/Eve - Sky hover. Telescope. Angel hair - x - x  
10-27 - Riverhead, N.Y. - Thu/2400 - Hovered - x - (A)  
11-? - Kingsport, Tenn. - x - Flyby - Dolen - (A)  
11-18 - Dallas, Tex. - Fri/2400-0300 - Flyby - x - x
- 1967:
- 1-9 - Mt. Clemens, Mich. - Mon/1430 - Hovered. Photo - Jaroslaw - (A,B)  
2-? - Nr. Wharton, Tex. - x - Low, maneuvered - x - (B)  
3-? - No. Houston, Tex. - x - Hovered low - Kaiser - (A)  
3-? - Nr. Piggott, Ark. - Flyby - x - (A)  
4-24 - Monroe, No. Car. - Mon/Eve - Paced car. Hovered - Whitney - (A)  
6-28 - New Castle, Pa. - Wed/x - Hovered. Photos - Kozora - x  
9-7 - Alamosa, Colo. - Thu/x - Flyover. Snippy found. Ground marks - King - (A)
- 1968:
- 2-4 - Dallas, Tex. - Sun/2000 - Slow flyby - x - (A,B)  
3-3 - Indiana & Tenn. - Sun/2145 - Flyover - x - (B)  
3-21 - Alamosa, Colo. - Thu/x - Low, maneuvered - Nicholas - x  
4-7 - Seattle, Wash. - Sun/Nite - Formation flight, maneuvered - x - (E)  
4-5 - Madrid, Spain - Thu/Aftn - Hovered (balloon?) - x - (B)  
1-3 - Houston, Tex. - Sun/1615 - Low flyby. Angel hair - x - x  
(A): Dallas Times Herald (B): Dallas Times News



He was somewhat put out by the statements which were made in some of the morning papers and declared that many which were attributed to him were false.

"I have never seen the air-ship in my life," he said, "and I know very little about it. A very wealthy acquaintance of mine called on me about a week ago and asked me to draw up papers for a practical patent on an air-ship. I believe him to be thoroughly sane, and listened with interest as he discussed the apparatus. However, from his description I could not draw up the papers without first having a personal knowledge from a model. He left me and promised to return today with a model to show me. So far he has not appeared."

The attorney refused to give any names whatever, or enter into the details of the supposed invention. He said the matter was as much a mystery to him as to many others.

Up to a late hour the inventor failed to materialize with his model.

#### SEEKING THE PATENT

Inquiry Is Made Among The Various Attorneys At Washington

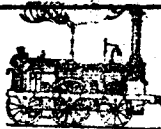
Washington, Nov. 23 (AP) - At the Patent Office today nothing could be learned of an application for a patent on the flying machine alleged to be making successful flights in the neighborhood of Sacramento.

The rules of the office forbid any disclosure of names of applicants or the character of inventions for which they seek protection.

Inquiry among the patent attorneys known to control the Pacific Coast business, failed to disclose any knowledge of the alleged success in aeronautics.

Professor Langley, of the Smithsonian Institution, who has experimented scientifically for some time to demonstrate the best methods of solving the question of aerial navigation, excused himself from discussing the matter. His manner indicated plainly that he gave little credence to the Sacramento reports. (Oakland Tribune, Oakland, Calif., 23 Nov 1896)

-to be continued



#### ENIGMATOLOGICAL SURVEY

-Paul Braczyk

Roy Norton's article MONUMENTS TO UFO SPACE PIONEERS? in the June/72 SAGA is a good article about the enigmatic Egyptian pyramids although, it seems to me, that he doesn't tell us anything we already didn't know, and what he does tell us, does not live up to what we expect from the title of the article. Mr. Norton states that he went to Egypt on assignment from SAGA. Well, SAGA could have saved quite a bundle by visiting their local library; they would have gleaned all the same facts, and perhaps a few more. Now I am not trying to say that the facts are not interesting - for they certainly are - and so is this article. The thing is, that from the title of the article we are led to believe that we are about to be told new revelations concerning the pyramids and their connection to UFOs. Unfortunately, the only references to UFOs we find are quotes from Morris Jessup's THE CASE FOR UFOs (sic) which was first published in 1955, and a re-hash of the contactee claims of Reinhold Schmidt.

A calm port in the storm-tossed seas of re-hash is Ivan Sanderson's latest enigmatological effort INVESTIGATING THE UNEXPLAINED: A compendium of Disquieting Mysteries Of the Natural World. I suppose that if Mr. Sanderson can't come up with original material, as director of The Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained, no one can. There are all kinds of goodies in this book, including all kinds of "extras" that you always want to see included in books of this type but never are, e.g. good references appendices, charts, diagrams, photos, etc. Written in the true fortune vein, the book contains what can only be described as fortune; monster reports, sky falls, spontaneous human combustion, and so on and so forth... I can truthfully say that this is one of the best books that I have read lately. It is available through Publishers Service Company, 485 Main Street, Fort Lee, N.J. 07024 for \$7.95 + .55 postage or in your local bookstore (Prentice Hall is the publisher).

Following my policy of bringing to you information concerning new and interesting



## Attorney Collins' Story Is Believed By His Friends



23 Nov 1896 - Oakland, Calif. (Mon/1900)-(4)

That a huge airship has been hovering over Oakland for the last few nights has in the minds of many been conclusively proven. A number of persons whose integrity is unquestionable have seen the strange navigator of the air and this number includes many whose skepticism has been pronounced.

Last evening at about 7:30 o'clock, the passengers on an Alameda car were startled by the sight of a brilliant stream of light high in the heavens off in the direction of Hayward. The passengers distinctly saw the outlines of an airship and watched its maneuvers high in the skies.

The ship resembles a huge bird in its outlines and seemed to rise and fall in its course. A light streamed from the head of the ship, throwing a white stream of light for several hundred yards.

As the outlines of the airship were plainly discerned. The passengers in the street car became greatly excited. The phenomenon had first been noted by a man who had been idly watching the heavens. As soon as he perceived the light he attracted the attention of the other passengers and all intensely interested, watched the peculiar machine as it made its way through the skies. It was high in the heavens and appeared to be of huge size. When first seen it seemed to be floating over San Leandro. It moved rapidly, going at least twenty miles an hour. It shot across the skies to the northwest, then turned quickly and disappeared in the direction of Hayward.

Not only was the airship seen by the passengers, but many other residents of this city distinctly saw the brilliant light and the huge bird-like body floating in mid-air. None of the spectators were acquainted with each other and yet their stories are startlingly similar, agreeing as to time, direction of the airship and description. These facts leave little doubt in the minds of many people that a successful airship has been invented and is navigating the heavens.

Miss Wilson, a daughter of Captain Wilson of the police force, and her friend, Miss Hunter, are among those who viewed the strange sight. The two friends accompanied another young lady to the street car about 7 P.M. yesterday, when their attention was attracted by the peculiar light in the skies. The huge bird-like body from which the light emanated was clearly visible and both young ladies are positive that it was an airship. It followed the same course as described by the passengers on the Alameda car.

Other Oaklanders bear similar testimony. Officer Carson was startled by the strange sight and his story is not to be shaken by scoffers. His experience was like others.

Attorney A. A. Moore told a Tribune reporter this morning that Attorney George D. Collins of Alameda informed him (Moore) two days ago that a successful airship had been invented and that the inventor was a client of Collins. The story of its aerial navigations was a fact, he declared, and the public would learn more concerning it in a few days.

A clerk in Attorney Collins' office corroborated this statement and also said that it was a fact that the airship has been navigating the heavens above Oakland, Hayward and vicinity. He furthermore added that the airship left that evening for Los Angeles. This will account for its maneuvers last evening when it was seen hovering in the northwest.

As all the persons relating the accounts of the airship are reputable persons, a general belief in the story is gaining ground.

The inventor's attorney, George D. Collins, withholds his client's name at present. The machine is run by compressed air and generates its own electricity for the powerful arc light. Further particulars in regard to the invention Mr. Collins declines to give at present.

### THROWS A DAMPER

### What Attorney Collins Says Regarding The Inventor

Attorney Collins, who figures in the airship mystery, was interviewed by a Tribune reporter this afternoon with regard to his connection with the affair.

1896 AIRSHIP SIGHTINGS

PART II

Submitted by Mr. Donald H. White of Oakland, California

**YOU CAN'T MISS IT**

Just Look At The Sky And You Will See The Airship

SO SAY THE CREDULOUS

It Was In Red Bluff And Also Oakland Last Night

EXPERIENCES ARE RELATED

All Sorts of Rumors Are Floating About The Town



25 Nov 1896 - Red Bluff- Chico- Leesville, Calif. (Wed/1900) - (4)

Red Bluff, Nov. 26 - Many residents assert they saw the alleged airship in this neighborhood last evening.

It was first noticed about 7 o'clock, and was thought to be a particularly bright star, but which was moving rapidly in a southwesterly direction towards the mountains.

It finally disappeared over the mountains.

The summit of the mountains could be seen above the mysterious light as it moved west.

Soon after its disappearance a telegram from Chico stated the supposed airship had passed that town soon after 1 o'clock.

After it vanished it again passed over Red Bluff, and then a telegram from Leesville said the supposed airship had come from the direction of Red Bluff, and after making a few turns had returned in the direction from which it came.

Several citizens say that while at the first only a light was visible, that later the body of an egg shaped object was visible moving quickly through the air.

The theory that it was a star was rejected because of its distinctly rocking motion; which was like the motion made by a kite.

SEEN IN OAKLAND

Many Believe In The Mystery, Recite their Personal Experiences

Oakland, Calif. (Wed/1815)-(4)

The fact that what was apparently the same mysterious object, is claimed to have been seen earlier in the evening by a large number of Oaklanders, causes some doubt to arise in the minds of many.

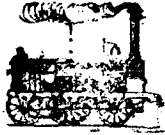
The meteoric display which an astronomer predicted for the 13th of this month, has been brought into the case and now it is being claimed that the visions are nothing less than meteors and comets which are participating in Heaven's pyrotechnic display one by one.

Charles White of East Oakland says he is positive he saw the airship last night. He crossed on the 6:15 o'clock ferry from San Francisco and says that while on the cable car to the boat a number of passengers noticed what appeared to be the mysterious visitor in the heavens near South San Francisco. It rapidly approached and raced the boat across the bay, beating it so badly that it was hovering over Alameda by the time the boat docked. From the train the passengers saw the light continuing in the same direction and later when on an Eighth street electric car could plainly discern it though then the object was far distant.

A. B. Parker, conductor of the car, corroborates the story, for he, with a number of others watched the strange thing until it disappeared from view.

A small-sized scare was started today, when the present location of the airship was said to be in Alameda. A visit to the location described revealed nothing but the remains of an experimental torpedo boat which had been built some years ago.

The uncertainty of the thing has been causing much speculation, and now the streets are lined with an inquisitive throng, all gazing heavenward. (Oakland Tribune, Oakland, Calif., 25 Nov 1896)



1896 AIRSHIP SIGHTINGS  
PART III

This is the final installment of the group of historical clippings submitted by Mr. Donald H. White of Oakland, California.

EITHER MARS OR VENUS - Professor Burckhalter Tells of the "Airship's" Light  
HE LAUGHS AT THE TALES - The Astronomers, He Said, Have Not Noted Anything Unusual  
WHAT THE WATCHERS SAW - He says the Present Theories Are All Pure Fakes

30 Nov 1896 - Oakland California

There is one confirmed skeptic in regard to the airship. He is Professor Burckhalter of the Shabot Observatory. His time has been taken up lately by persons who are anxious to view the aerial machine through the telescope. Many persons have advanced the theory that the airship is a clever advertising dodge of some gas company that is trying to boom a new kind of illuminating gas. Professor Burckhalter laughs at this theory as well as others.

"If there were any airship I would turn the telescope on it, you may be sure," said Prof. Burckhalter today. "What people have been taking for the brilliant electric light of an airship is nothing more or less than one of the two planets, Mars or Venus. People want to believe in the airship, and it is astonishing the way they deceive themselves. Venus is as brilliant as an arc light and does move very slowly through the heavens. Anyone who pays a little attention to the heavens might be deceived into believing it an electric light gleaming through the clouds. Last Saturday night when there was such excitement over the airship, what people were looking at was the planet Mars, which appeared very brilliant that evening.

The theories in regard to the airship are pure imagination. If there were any strange objects in the heavens, we would certainly know if it, and all these theories are, I believe, pure fakes." (Oakland Tribune, Oakland, Calif., 30 Nov 1896)

SAYS HE SAW IT - Case Gillson Gives a Graphic Description of the Airship  
HE WATCHED IT MOVING - It Was About 1500 Feet Above the Level Ground  
SIDE PROPELLERS WORKED - It Was Cigar Shaped With a Tail Like a Fish's

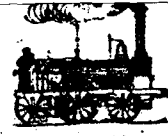
26 Nov 1896 - Oakland, Calif. (Thu/2000)-(4)

The airship has again been careering through Oakland atmosphere, and has even permitted a favored few to catch a glimpse of its metal sides and patent wings. Those who have seen it refuse to believe that they were misled by their imaginations or have mistaken Mars or Venus for electric light streaming from the fancied head of a mythical airship.

Now a young electrician of this city declares on his work of honor, that he has seen the airship at close range, and describes its exact appearance. The young man is Case Gillson, a son of Professor Gillson, ex-Superintendent of Schools and principal of the Normal Training School. His testimony is supported by other young men who saw the strange aerial navigator at the same time.

Gillson and his friends saw the airship twice during last Thursday evening, at 8 and 8:30 P.M. The skies were perfectly clear, and a strong northwest wind was blowing. The airship was moving rapidly from the southeast towards the north in the teeth of the wind. No light was visible, merely the weird peculiar body silhouetted against the clear skies. Case Gillson, his small brother and the Petah brothers distinctly saw the strange sight, and Gillson describes its appearance very graphically.

"The airship was moving very rapidly from the southeast towards Lorin, and not a light was visible," said Gillson. "It was about 1,000 or 1,500 feet in the air and looked like a great black cigar with a fish-like tail. If it had side propellers, they were revolving so rapidly that I could not see them. The body was at least 100 feet long and attached to it was a triangular tail, one apex being attached to the main body. The surface of the airship looked as if it were made of aluminum, which exposure to wind and weather had turned dark. I saw all this distinctly, and I am willing to take



any oath to the truth of what I say.

The airship went at a tremendous speed. As it neared Lorin it turned quickly and disappeared in the direction of San Francisco. At half past 8 we saw it again, when it took about the same direction and disappeared.

"I have studied the subject of airships to a certain extent, and I see no reason why one should not be successful. I know that I was not mistaken about the airship and took a kite for the real thing. It was an airship, of that I am convinced.

Gillson has some ideas of his own on the construction of airships, and since seeing the strange objects in the skies has become more enthusiastic than ever.

Percy Drew was another individual favored with a glimpse of the airship. He says it visited Oakland Saturday night. It then carried a red light and moved with its usual quickness. Both young men agree that the ship was of enormous size, measuring at least 100 feet in length. Gillson thinks nitrogen gas is used to lift the machine, and that Fargo electric batteries supply the propelling power.

Gillson is at present the only person who has openly declared that the machine was visible on a clear night. Its previous appearances have been on cloudy, obscure nights, when persons may have been misled by taking stars for electric lights and clouds for the shadowy form of an airship. Gillson is also an amateur astronomer, and declares that he could not mistake a star or a cloud for an airship. He believes that if the French made a partial success of an airship in 1888 it is not surprising that American enterprise has perfected plans for a machine which is now successfully navigating the atmosphere. Why the machine does not appear in the daylight no one seems to know, and until it does unbelievers will continue to scoff.

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**HOW ABOUT THIS? - A San Josean Declares That He Travelled on the Ship  
26 Nov 1896 - San Francisco, Calif. (Thu/Day)-(I-3\$)**

The champion airship story of the season is told by John A. Horen, an electrician in the employ of the Electric Improvement Co. of this place (San Jose).

Horen says he has a patent on an electric platinum speaking apparatus, and by appointment he went to San Francisco Thursday to see the inventor of the airship who wished to see the apparatus.

Said Horen: "We went on horseback to a point on Sandy Beach where the airship was, got aboard and rose very high.

"The height was registered by a meter on the ship.

"The inventor does not count the distance traveled by miles, but by degrees after leaving the starting point.

"Thursday afternoon we traveled westward before day, and the next morning saw lights. The inventor said they were the lights of Honolulu.

"We turned east and Saturday evening about dark landed near where we started.

"The airship arose by means of two propellers, the movement was noiseless and swift.

"The inventor is 45 years old, but I cannot now tell any news, but the motive power is not steam or electricity.

"It is a wonderful machine and can be stopped and made to stand still in the air anywhere. It comes down as lightly as a feather.

Horen lives at the New York Exchange Hotel and went to San Francisco Thursday.

Some seem to give credence to his story, and all admire his ability as an accomplished story teller, and say he has a magnificent imagination.

He sticks to his story.

He bears the name of a hard-working sober man.

The August/72 issue of SAGA contains an article by Richard Winer titled BERMUDA TRIANGLE--UFO TWILIGHT ZONE. Mr. Winer begins the article by chastising "other authors" for "borrowing their facts" from previous works and research (Vincent Gaddis)

contactee material, I would like to mention a book called THE SHOCKING TRUTH by Albert Coe. The "storyline" is familiar enough - Earthling stumbles across being from another planet who takes him into confidence and reveals the usual contactee-type stuff - the difference, and there IS a difference, is that Albert Coe is exceptionally articulate and his story has no religious overtones. These two facts alone cause the reader to sit up and take notice. Could it be that Albert Coe is telling it as it happened? I don't know, but he tells it like it did. Another unusual thing is the quality of the illustrations; usually the author scratches something out and labels it "flying saucer" or "Venusian" or something, but here we have some of the most artistic sketches that I have seen in any book, let alone a contactee-oriented one. These were done by Thomas Lulevitch. Quite a curious book, this one! It is available through Franklin O. Pease, P.O. Box 413, Philadelphia, PA 19105 for \$5.95 + .75¢ shipping and handling - Pennsylvania residents must add .36¢ sales tax.

For the past few months I have been mentioning UFO books published by Exposition Press. For anyone interested in their material I would also like to mention that a large catalogue of books is available by dropping a note to Exposition Press Inc., 50 Jericho Turnpike, Jericho, New York 11753. And you know you don't hardly get nuttin' for free these days.

John Keel's ANOMALY has changed its image somewhat in issue number 7; it is now subtitled "A Journal of Forteana" and has the look of a professional magazine. This one is also free! Send a 9 X 12 manila envelope, self-addressed and stamped with .16¢ postage, to Specialized Research, P.O. Box 351, Murray Hill Station, New York, N.Y. 10006 for your copy. I suppose that the "gimmick" here, if you can call it that, is that Keel uses this magazine for gathering material for his books.

You may recall reading about some "Viking runestones" found at Popham Beach, Maine awhile back in the papers. If you are a pre-Columbian discovery of America buff, you might like to get a copy of THE SPIRIT POND RUNESTONES published by the New England Antiquities Research Association. This contains all the up-to-date info on the runestones, including photographs and maps. To non-members of the association it sells for \$2.00 and is available from NEARA, 4 Smith St., Milford, N.H. 03055. If you are interested in unusual archeology you might consider joining NEARA. Write to Andrew Rothovius at the above address for details.

The June/72 issue of FATE contains two good articles of interest to enigmatologists: A FLAP OF GLOWING CROSSES by David Techter and ON THE TRAIL OF PUMAS AND ULAS (unidentified leaping animals -- a touch of Keelian humor there) by Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman.

THE OUTSIDERS: True Documented Accounts of Their Activities is a new nicely-printed bulletin being put out by Robert Goerman. This first issue contains some MIB material and an interesting piece on how to turn your TV set into a UFO detector. The subscription rates are \$4.00 per year for four, 4-page issues: THE OUTSIDERS, 615 Earl Avenue, New Kensington, PA 15068.

THE FLITTERING FINGER OF FORTEANA This month's poison projectile goes to Wilfred Grist of Devises, England. Why you say? Simply because Grist's horde of 968 pigs ate Brian King's airplane! They also ate four gates, two-and-a-half tons of hay, a hay wagon, 30 asbestos sheets, half-a-ton of cattle food, electric wires and damaged three acres of pasture land, but that's another story.....

#### CLIPPING THE NEWS

##### UFO REPORTS

3 Jan 1971 - Tafe Viejo, Tucuman, Argentina (Sat/Day)-(I-@#) - UFO LANDS--LEAVES TRACES

A farmer and his nephew working in the fields sighted a mysterious object which settled to the ground, burning pastures, part of a cornfield, and dried up lomon plants. The object was shaped like two dishes joined at the rims, and emitted a whistle "like the wind;" its lower part was reddish and its upper part, whence emerged 2 antennae in the form of a V, appeared to be aluminum like an airplane's fuselage. It was 2 meters in diameter and 1 meter in height, was very flat, and lacked windows. They said that they had been afraid and thus had not attempted to approach it. Witness Andres Angonio Lopez, 32, who is in charge of the Alberto Zorzosa estate, said the "thing" settled

1.890-97

1896 AIRSHIP SIGHTINGS  
PART II

Submitted by Mr. Donald H. White of Oakland, California

"DATA-NET"

YOU CAN'T MISS IT  
Just Look At The Sky And You Will See The Airship  
SO SAY THE CREDULOUS  
It Was In Red Bluff And Also Oakland Last Night  
EXPERIENCES ARE RELATED  
All Sorts of Rumors Are Floating About The Town



25 Nov. 1896 - Red Bluff- Chico- Leesville, Calif. (Wed/1900) - (4)

Red Bluff, Nov. 26 - Many residents assert they saw the alleged airship in this neighborhood last evening.

It was first noticed about 7 o'clock, and was thought to be a particularly bright star, but which was moving rapidly in a southwesterly direction towards the mountains. It finally disappeared over the mountains.

The summit of the mountains could be seen above the mysterious light as it moved west.

Soon after its disappearance a telegram from Chico stated the supposed airship had passed that town soon after 1 o'clock.

After it vanished it again passed over Red Bluff, and then a telegram from Leesville said the supposed airship had come from the direction of Red Bluff, and after making a few turns had returned in the direction from which it came.

Several citizens say that while at the first only a light was visible, that later the body of an egg shaped object was visible moving quickly through the air.

The theory that it was a star was rejected because of its distinctly rocking motion; which was like the motion made by a kite.

DN, Jc-72

SEEN IN OAKLAND

Many Believe In The Mystery, Recite their Personal Experiences

Oakland, Calif. (Wed/1815)-(4)

The fact that what was apparently the same mysterious object, is claimed to have been seen earlier in the evening by a large number of Oaklanders, causes some doubt to arise in the minds of many.

The meteoric display which an astronomer predicted for the 13th of this month, has been brought into the case and now it is being claimed that the visions are nothing less than meteors and comets which are participating in Heaven's pyrotechnic display one by one.

Charles White of East Oakland says he is positive he saw the airship last night. He crossed on the 6:15 o'clock ferry from San Francisco and says that while on the cable car to the boat a number of passengers noticed what appeared to be the mysterious visitor in the heavens near South San Francisco. It rapidly approached and raced the boat across the bay, beating it so badly that it was hovering over Alameda by the time the boat docked. From the train the passengers saw the light continuing in the same direction and later when on an Eighth street electric car could plainly discern it though then the object was far distant.

A. B. Parker, conductor of the car, corroborates the story, for he, with a number of others watched the strange thing until it disappeared from view.

A small-sized scare was started today, when the present location of the airship was said to be in Alameda. A visit to the location described revealed nothing but the remains of an experimental torpedo boat which had been built some years ago.

The uncertainty of the thing has been causing much speculation, and now the street are lined with an inquisitive throng, all gazing heavenward. (Oakland Tribune, Oakland Calif., 25 Nov. 1896)



1.896-97

on new and recent UFO sightings to the panel. When appropriate, the panel will send experienced researchers to probe the sightings on the spot.

A reward of \$1,000 will be paid by the ENQUIRER, at the discretion of the panel, for information on outstanding cases. Where several informants are involved, the panel will decide on the distribution of the \$1,000. The panel's decision will be final.

Mail your evidence to: UFO PROBE, ENQUIRER, 600 South East Coast Avenue, Lantana, Fla. 33462.

This offer shall not be construed as an inducement to betray any military secrets of the United States. (National Enquirer, Jan 1973) (Cr: J. Clark)

PICTURES OF UFO-LIKE CRAFT IN THE FRENCH LITERATURE OF THE XIX CENTURY

Our Spanish friends Mr. Antonio Ribera and Mr. Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos, have sent us two drawings that show aircraft of the same type we today call UFOs...which appeared in two French novels published in 1896 (Figure 1) and 1905 (Figure 2)!

The reproductions below have been copied from the Spanish magazine ARGOS, No. 2335, July 12, 1961.

Figure 1 is an illustration from a novel entitled "The Black Invasion" written by Captain Driant, a French deputy who died as a hero at Verdun (first world war).

Figure 2 is an engraving from "The Infernal War", a novel by the Frenchman Mericant, released in 1905. The magazine ARGOS says that "it is the flying machine of the Capazza (1889)."

The historian might find of potential interest this information that Ribera and Ballester Olmos have uncovered for us."

"DATA NET", JANUARY 1. 1973



Figure 1

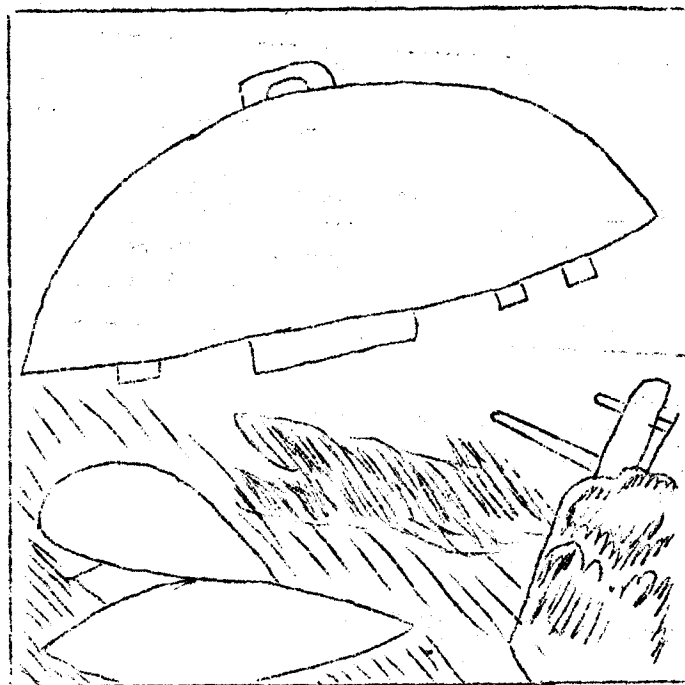


Figure 2



Attorney Collins' Story Is Believed By His Friends



3 Nov 1896 - Oakland, Calif. (Mon/1900)-(4), "OAKLAND TRIBUNE"

That a huge airship has been hovering over Oakland for the last few nights has in the minds of many been conclusively proven. A number of persons whose integrity is unquestionable have seen the strange navigator of the air and this number includes many whose skepticism has been pronounced.

Last evening at about 7:30 o'clock, the passengers on an Alameda car were startled by the sight of a brilliant stream of light high in the heavens off in the direction of Hayward. The passengers distinctly saw the outlines of an airship and watched its maneuvers high in the skies.

The ship resembles a huge bird in its outlines and seemed to rise and fall in its course. A light streamed from the head of the ship, throwing a white stream of light for several hundred yards.

As the outlines of the airship were plainly discerned. The passengers in the street car became greatly excited. The phenomenon had first been noted by a man who had been idly watching the heavens. As soon as he perceived the light he attracted the attention of the other passengers and all intensely interested, watched the peculiar machine as it made its way through the skies. It was high in the heavens and appeared to be of huge size. When first seen it seemed to be floating over San Leandro. It moved rapidly, going at least twenty miles an hour. It shot across the skies to the northwest, then turned quickly and disappeared in the direction of Hayward.

Not only was the airship seen by the passengers, but many other residents of this city distinctly saw the brilliant light and the huge bird-like body floating in mid-air. None of the spectators were acquainted with each other and yet their stories are startlingly similar, agreeing as to time, direction of the airship and description. These facts leave little doubt in the minds of many people that a successful airship has been invented and is navigating the heavens.

Miss Wilson, a daughter of Captain Wilson of the police force, and her friend, Miss Hunter, are among those who viewed the strange sight. The two friends accompanied another young lady to the street car about 7 P.M. yesterday, when their attention was attracted by the peculiar light in the skies. The huge bird-like body from which the light emanated was clearly visible and both young ladies are positive that it was an airship. It followed the same course as described by the passengers on the Alameda car.

Other Oaklanders bear similar testimony. Officer Carson was startled by the strange sight and his story is not to be shaken by scoffers. His experience was like others.

Attorney A. A. Moore told a Tribune reporter this morning that Attorney George D. Collins of Alameda informed him (Moore) two days ago that a successful airship had been invented and that the inventor was a client of Collins. The story of its aerial navigations was a fact, he declared, and the public would learn more concerning it in a few days.

A clerk in Attorney Collins' office corroborated this statement and also said that it was a fact that the airship has been navigating the heavens above Oakland, Hayward and vicinity. He furthermore added that the airship left that evening for Los Angeles. This will account for its maneuvers last evening when it was seen hovering in the north west.

As all the persons relating the accounts of the airship are reputable persons, a general belief in the story is gaining ground.

The inventor's attorney, George D. Collins, withholds his client's name at present. The machine is run by compressed air and generates its own electricity for the powerful arc light. Further particulars in regard to the invention Mr. Collins declines to give at present.

DN, JN-72

THROWS A DAMPER

What Attorney Collins Says Regarding The Inventor

Attorney Collins, who figures in the airship mystery, was interviewed by a Tribune reporter this afternoon with regard to his connection with the affair.

He was somewhat put out by the statements which were made in some of the morning papers and declared that many which were attributed to him were false.

"I have never seen the air-ship in my life," he said, "and I know very little about it. A very wealthy acquaintance of mine called on me about a week ago and asked me to draw up papers for a practical patent on an air-ship. I believe him to be thoroughly sane, and listened with interest as he discussed the apparatus. However, from his description I could not draw up the papers without first having a personal knowledge from a model. He left me and promised to return today with a model to show me. So far he has not appeared."

The attorney refused to give any names whatever, or enter into the details of the supposed invention. He said the matter was as much a mystery to him as to many others. Up to a late hour the inventor failed to materialize with his model.

#### SEEKING THE PATENT

Inquiry Is Made Among The Various Attorneys At Washington

Washington, Nov. 23 (AP) - At the Patent Office today nothing could be learned of an application for a patent on the flying machine alleged to be making successful flights in the neighborhood of Sacramento.

The rules of the office forbid any disclosure of names of applicants or the character of inventions for which they seek protection.

Inquiry among the patent attorneys known to control the Pacific Coast business, failed to disclose any knowledge of the alleged success in aeronautics.

Professor Langley, of the Smithsonian Institution, who has experimented scientifically for some time to demonstrate the best methods of solving the question of aerial navigation, excused himself from discussing the matter. His manner indicated plainly that he gave little credence to the Sacramento reports. (Oakland Tribune, Oakland, Calif., 23 Nov 1896)

-to be continued



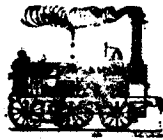
#### ENIGMATOLOGICAL SURVEY

-Paul Braczyk

Roy Norton's article MONUMENTS TO UFO SPACE PIONEERS? in the June/72 SAGA is a good article about the enigmatic Egyptian pyramids although, it seems to me, that he doesn't tell us anything we already didn't know, and what he does tell us, does not live up to what we expect from the title of the article. Mr. Norton states that he went to Egypt on assignment from SAGA. Well, SAGA could have saved quite a bundle by visiting their local library; they would have gleaned all the same facts, and perhaps a few more. Now I am not trying to say that the facts are not interesting - for they certainly are - and so is this article. The thing is, that from the title of the article we are led to believe that we are about to be told new revelations concerning the pyramids and their connection to UFOs. Unfortunately, the only references to UFOs we find are quotes from Morris Jessup's THE CASE FOR UFOs (sic) which was first published in 1955, and a re-hash of the contactee claims of Reinhold Schmidt.

A calm port in the storm-tossed seas of re-hash is Ivan Sanderson's latest enigmatological effort INVESTIGATING THE UNEXPLAINED: A compendium of Disquieting Mysteries Of the Natural World. I suppose that if Mr. Sanderson can't come up with original material, as director of The Society for the Investigation of the Unexplained, no one can. There are all kinds of goodies in this book, including all kinds of "extras" that you always want to see included in books of this type but never are, e.g. good references, appendices, charts, diagrams, photos, etc. Written in the true fortean vein, the book contains what can only be described as forteana; monster reports, sky falls, spontaneous human combustion, and so on and so forth... I can truthfully say that this is one of the best books that I have read lately. It is available through Publishers Service Company, 485 Main Street, Fort Lee, N.J. 07024 for \$7.95 + .55 postage or in your local bookstore (Prentice Hall is the publisher).

Following my policy of bringing to you information concerning new and interesting



1896 AIRSHIP SIGHTING

PART III

This is the final installment of the group of historical clippings submitted by Mr. Donald H. White of Oakland, California.

**EITHER MARS OR VENUS - Professor Burckhalter Tells of the "Airship's" Light**  
**HE DENIES THE TALES - The Astronomers, He Said, Have Not Noted Anything Unusual**  
**WHEN THE WATCHERS SAW - He says the Present Theories Are All Pure Fakes**

Oakland, California

DN, Ac-72

There is one confirmed skeptic in regard to the airship. He is Professor Burckhalter of the Shabot Observatory. His time has been taken up lately by persons who are trying to see the aerial machine through the telescope. Many persons have advanced the theory that the airship is a clever advertising dodge of some gas company that is using a new kind of illuminating gas. Professor Burckhalter laughs at this and says, "Well as others.

"If there were any airship I would turn the telescope on it, you may be sure," says Professor Burckhalter today. "What people have been taking for the brilliant electric light of an airship is nothing more or less than one of the two planets, Mars or Venus. People want to believe in the airship, and it is astonishing the way they deceive themselves. Venus is as brilliant as an arc light and does move very slowly through the heavens. Anyone who pays a little attention to the heavens might be deceived into believing it an electric light gleaming through the clouds. Last Saturday night when there was such excitement over the airship, what people were looking at was the planet Mars, which appeared very brilliant that evening.

The theories in regard to the airship are pure imagination. If there were any strange objects in the heavens, we would certainly know if it, and all these theories are, I believe, pure fakes." (Oakland Tribune, Oakland, Calif., 30 Nov 1896)

**SAYS HE SAW IT - Case Gillson Gives a Graphic Description of the Airship**  
**HE WATCHED IT MOVING - It Was About 1500 Feet Above the Level Ground**  
**SIDE PROPELLERS WORKED - It Was Cigar Shaped With a Tail Like a Fish's**

26 Nov 1896 - Oakland, Calif. (Thu/2000)-(4)

The airship has again been careering through Oakland atmosphere, and has even permitted a favored few to catch a glimpse of its metal sides and patent wings. Those who have seen it refuse to believe that they were misled by their imaginations or have mistaken Mars or Venus for electric light streaming from the fancied head of a mythical airship.

Now a young electrician of this city declares on his work of honor, that he has seen the airship at close range, and describes its exact appearance. The young man is Case Gillson, a son of Professor Gillson, ex-Superintendent of Schools and principal of the Normal Training School. His testimony is supported by other young men who saw the strange aerial navigator at the same time.

Gillson and his friends saw the airship twice during last Thursday evening, at 8 and 8:30 P.M. The skies were perfectly clear, and a strong northwest wind was blowing. The airship was moving rapidly from the southeast towards the north in the teeth of the wind. No light was visible, merely the weird peculiar body silhouetted against the clear skies. Case Gillson, his small brother and the Petah brothers distinctly saw the strange sight, and Gillson describes its appearance very graphically.

"The airship was moving very rapidly from the southeast towards Lorin, and not a light was visible," said Gillson. "It was about 1,000 or 1,500 feet in the air and looked like a great black cigar with a fish-like tail. If it had side propellers, they were revolving so rapidly that I could not see them. The body was at least 100 feet long and attached to it was a triangular tail, one apex being attached to the main body. The surface of the airship looked as if it were made of aluminum, which exposure to wind and weather had turned dark. I saw all this distinctly, and I am willing to take



my oath to the truth of what I say.

The airship went at a tremendous speed. As it neared Lorin it turned quickly and disappeared in the direction of San Francisco. At half past 8 we saw it again, when it took about the same direction and disappeared.

"I have studied the subject of airships to a certain extent, and I see no reason why one should not be successful. I know that I was not mistaken about the airship and took a kite for the real thing. It was an airship, of that I am convinced."

Gillson has some ideas of his own on the construction of airships, and since seeing the strange objects in the skies has become more enthusiastic than ever.

Percy Drew was another individual favored with a glimpse of the airship when it visited Oakland Saturday night. It then carried a red light and moved with unusual quickness. Both young men agree that the ship was of enormous size, at least 100 feet in length. Gillson thinks nitrogen gas is used to lift the ship, and that Fargo electric batteries supply the propelling power.

Gillson is at present the only person who has openly declared that he has seen an airship visible on a clear night. Its previous appearances have been on cloudy nights, when persons may have been misled by taking stars for electric lights and of the shadowy form of an airship. Gillson is also an amateur astronomer, and he says that he could not mistake a star or a cloud for an airship. He believes that the French made a partial success of an airship in 1888 it is not surprising that American enterprise has perfected plans for a machine which is now successfully navigating the atmosphere. Why the machine does not appear in the daylight no one seems to know, and until it does unbelievers will continue to scoff.

HOW ABOUT THIS? - A San Josean Declares That He Travelled on the Ship  
26 Nov 1896 - San Francisco, Calif. (Thu/Day)-(I-@)

The champion airship story of the season is told by John A. Horen, an electrician in the employ of the Electric Improvement Co. of this place (San Jose).

Horen says he has a patent on an electric platinum speaking apparatus, and by appointment he went to San Francisco Thursday to see the inventor of the airship who wished to see the apparatus.

Said Horen: "We went on horseback to a point on Sandy Beach where the airship was, got aboard and rose very high.

"The height was registered by a meter on the ship.

"The inventor does not count the distance traveled by miles, but by degrees after leaving the starting point.

"Thursday afternoon we traveled westward before day, and the next morning saw lights. The inventor said they were the lights of Honolulu.

"We turned east and Saturday evening about dark landed near where we started.

"The airship arose by means of two propellers, the movement was noiseless and swift.

"The inventor is 45 years old, but I cannot now tell any news, but the motive power is not steam or electricity.

"It is a wonderful machine and can be stopped and made to stand still in the air anywhere. It comes down as lightly as a feather."

Horen lives at the New York Exchange Hotel and went to San Francisco Thursday.

Some seem to give credence to his story, and all admire his ability as an accomplished story teller, and say he has a magnificent imagination.

He sticks to his story.

He bears the name of a hard-working sober man.

ENIGMATOLOGICAL SURVEY  
-Paul Braczyk

The August/72 issue of SAGA contains an article by Richard Winer titled BERMUDA TRIANGLE--UFO TWILIGHT ZONE. Mr. Winer begins the article by chastising "other authors" for "borrowing their facts" from previous works research (Vincent Gaddis)

### Case III

Vessel: *Brooklyn City* (Bristol Line)  
 Date: 12 February 1896 (3:05 a.m.)  
 Weather: Howling gale, cold

Location: One-fourth distance from New York City to Swansea, England.

Observation: Laden with tin, the vessel left Swansea on January 28th and during its 20-day voyage met all kinds of adverse weather. Chief Officer Ellis and Second Officer Deehle watched as a blinding flash of light blazed upon the truck of the foremast. Then, with a sharp crack of lightning and the sound of splintering wood, the truck split in two and fell on the deck, and a big splinter of the foretopmast came clattering after. A globe of fire, high, hot ball, two feet in diameter ran down the foremast quickly and gleamed with an intense white light, as though metal heated to its highest point. It illuminated the mast and rigging with a strange ghostly light and then struck the deck, bursting into a thousand brilliant fragments like a big rocket. Splinters were strewn on deck, with the ruins of the highly ornamental truck.

Comments: This is clearly an incident of ball lightning that occurred during adverse weather conditions.

### Case IV

Vessel: *Willkommen* (German oil tank steamer)<sup>4,5</sup>  
 Date: 17 November 1896 (after midnight)  
 Weather: Heavy seas

Location: Latitude 48°10' N, longitude 44° W

Observations: Arriving at New York City from Danzig, Poland, with 6,000 bags of beet sugar, Captain Schaeffer reported that a huge meteor shot across the sky from the southeast to the northwest plunging, hissing into the sea some distance ahead of the steamer. Almost immediately afterwards, a huge sea, like a tidal wave, broke over the vessel's bow and swept aft, doing but slight damage.

Comments: This close encounter with a meteor at sea by the *Willkommen*, may have been a straggler belonging to the Leonid meteor shower that was due on the morning of the 13th of that month, arriving several days later after the main stream had passed the earth—a consideration that has some merit to explain its appearance.

### Case V

Vessel: *Cawdor* (British)<sup>6</sup>  
 Date: 20 August 1897  
 Weather: Electrical storm  
 Location: Coast of Chile

Observations: Arriving in San Francisco, California from Swansea, England, on Nov. 20th after crossing Cape Horn on August 12th. All hands were on deck when a huge meteor flashed across the heavens and plunged into the sea close to the vessel to the concern of the crew over this near collision. Water was churned up and swept over the deck with a strong sulphurous odor hanging around the vessel.

Comments: A meteor having an odor that may have been generated during its passage through the atmosphere is itself a rare event. But that it had come so close to causing a disaster at sea keeps butting the statistical odds for such possible coincidences.

### Case VI

Vessel: *Supply* (United States)<sup>7</sup>  
 Date: 28 February 1904 (6:10 a.m.)  
 Weather: Clouds, less than a mile high

Location: Latitude 35°58' N, longitude 128°36' W.

Observations: Lieutenant Frank H. Schofield, command of the vessel enroute from Guam to San Francisco, California, and two others reported three meteors appearing near the horizon below the clouds traveling in a group from the northwest by north directly towards the ship. His detailed account is as follows:

"At first their angular motion was rapid and color a rather bright red. As they approached the ship they appeared to soar, passing above the clouds at an elevation of about forty-five degrees.

"After rising above the clouds their angular motion became less and less until it ceased, when they appeared to be moving directly away from the earth at an elevation of about seventy-five degrees and in a direction west-northwest. It was noted that the color became less pronounced as the meteors gained in angular elevation."

Schofield added to his comments about the most remarkable size and how in formation these meteors flew. The largest meteor had an apparent area of about six suns and was egg shaped, with the sharper end forward. This end was jagged. The second appeared to be twice the size of the sun; the third about sun size and both these were round.

Comments: Meteors do occasionally fly parallel with the earth and sometimes skim the earth's atmosphere to fly back into outer space again. But meteors, if Schofield's description is correct, do not fly upwards! Whether this was some unusual atmospheric anomaly is debatable, but it should be taken into consideration.

### Case VII

Vessel: *St. Andrew* (Phoenix Line)<sup>8,9</sup>  
 Date: 30 October 1906 (Half an hour before sunset)  
 Weather: Cloudy

Location: 60 miles eastward of Cape Race.

Observations: First Officer V. Spencer, on board the vessel enroute from Antwerp, Belgium, to Hoboken, New Jersey, told in detail of his observation of four meteors:

"I was standing on the bridge at half-past five, when I saw three meteors ahead about three miles away, flash as they fell, although it was before sundown. The sky was clouded and I had hardly noticed the fall of the meteors when the chief engineer cried out from below on deck, 'Look at that.'

"There, off to the south on our port beam, was a big meteor falling plainly less than a mile away. It appeared to be saucer shaped and showed like a white hot coal streamed a shower of reddish fire fully a mile long. While we were looking the meteor zigzagged, I supposed on account of its shape, and plunged into the sea. Up rose clouds of steam and the sea boiled for a space fully five or six hundred feet in diameter for several minutes.

"While the flight lasted only a few seconds, it seemed an hour, we saw it so plainly, and had it struck our ship it would have melted its way down through the steel hull and sent us without a moment's warning to the bottom."

Comments: A zigzagging meteor that was saucer shaped, is indeed, an unusual celestial anomaly. That it was able to boil thesea where it had struck for a considerable area and amount of time is also interesting. Though in this instance, the vessel was a safe distance away and was not, fortunately, placed in any immediate danger. As there were also three other meteors seen to fall before its appearance, it can be safely concluded

1.896-97

30 Comunicados

- La Parisien Libéré, 14.9.54
- La Montagne, 14.9.54
- La Croix, 14.9.54
- Libération, 14.9.54
- Feuille d'Avis de Neuchatel, 14.9.54, p.1
- La Croix du Nord, 15.9.54, p.2
- L'Observateur d'Avesnes, 15.9.54, p.1
- The Clearwater Sun (Clearwater, Florida), 21.10.54, p.3
- Nord-Matin, 29.10.54, p.1
- France-Soir, 15.9.54, pp.1,6
- Le Parisien Libéré, 15.9.54
- L'Union de Reims, 15.9.54, p.8
- Nord-Eclair, 16.9.54, pp.1,8
- Télégramme de Brest, 16.9.54
- Nouveau-Nord Maritime, 16.9.56, p.2
- Feuille d'Avis de Neuchatel, 16.9.54, p.1-9
- La Croix de l'Aisne, 26.9.54, p.6
- France-Dimanche 25 ó 26.10.54
- L'Observateur d'Avesnes, 29.9.54
- Radar, 13.10.54
- Radar, 17.10.54
- La Liberté, 19.10.54
- La Cité (Mons, Belgique), 19.10.54
- Nord-Eclair, 15.9.54, pp.1,9
- La Voix du Nord, 14.8.68, p.17
- La Face a Matin, 30.10.54, pp.1,10
- Sin referencias: "French landing reports"
- Del dossier de Ted Bloecher, Nov. 1 1954
- La Semaine du Nord, 4.2.55
- Ouranos nº 24 (3º Trim. 59) p.11-13
- Ouranos nº 25, pp.20-24
- Nord-France, 17-9-54, pp. 10-11

COMUNICADO

Jean Sider me ha encargado la publicación en suscripción de su obra titulada: "L'AIRSHIP DE 1897 - Contribution a l'étude socio-historique de la vague de dirigeables-fantomes aux Etats-Units".

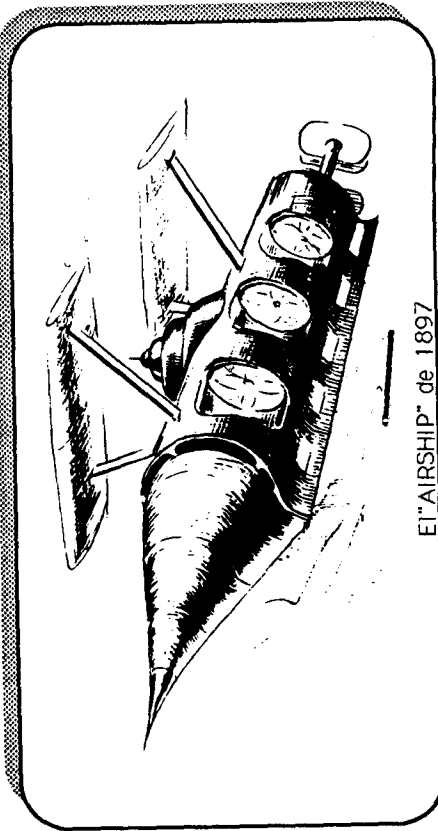
Se trata de una edición artesanal que cuenta con 373 páginas. Para reunir esta documentación inmediata, Jean Sider ha tenido que contactar con numerosos organismos especializados (bibliotecas públicas, museos, universidades, etc) e incluso pagar a estudiantes americanos para que llevaran a cabo revisiones de diversos periódicos de la época.

El precio de la obra es de 110 francos franceses + 20 F.F. de envío.

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Para lectores extranjeros, por giro postal internacional (International Money-Order) de 815 francos belgas a nombre de Henry Scornaux, 55, rue des Cultivateurs, 8-1040 Bruzelles, Belgica.



"L'AIRSHIP" de 1897

BOOK REVIEW 1.896-97

Ripley's Believe It or Not: Stars, Space, UFOs, Pocket Books, 1978, \$1.75.

The Ripley team's latest paperback is a mixture of straight data on astronomy and space flight and accounts of UFO encounters along with a scattering of sky falls and other oddities. Many of the cases discussed are old hat, of course, but the writers seem to have done their homework, although they give no references. Several of the incidents discussed were new to me, for example the case of Harry Sturdevant, a night watchman who received workmen's compensation for injuries received from a UFO in 1956, and an 1878 case that resulted in the first use of the term "flying saucer" - 69 years before Kenneth Arnold's sighting!

On the debit side I did notice a few

factual errors. For instance the 1897 Alexander Hamilton "cow-napping" is referred to as true, despite the fact that it has proved to be a hoax, (see the February 1977 issue of Fate) and the famous case of the green children has been inexplicably switched from 13th century England to Spain in 1897. Moreover, the authors seem unduly biased toward the extraterrestrial hypothesis, citing such dubious evidence as a dead "spaceman" supposedly picked up by the Air Force in 1948. Dissenting views, whether from skeptics or more speculative UFOlogists, are not discussed.

Despite its flaws, however, I think that this book would serve as a nice, inexpensive introduction to the subject for the budding Fortean, and may even provide a few hours' pleasant reading for the more advanced student.

David Hricenak, Pennsylvania.



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# AIRSHIPS? NO!

By William H. Banks

Writing in the *MUFON UFO Journal* (No. 172, June 1982) Dr. Louis Walker states:

...I chose to believe the vast majority of what I read (about the 1896/1897 airships in the contemporary newspapers). It is much more reasonable to believe that nearly all the newspapers in the country are reporting what the populace believes rather than stories conceived in the minds of newspaper employees.

My first reaction was incredulity. A cursory examination shows this skepticism to be fully justified. For instance, the *New York Times* of October 6, 1897 reports (under the title "Will Try His Airship") that "...Gus Whitehead, an ingenious, young mechanic" would fly "his forty-second airship" on Sunday next.

Alas, nothing further was recorded of this determined — if not quite ingenious — young man. It should be noted that, despite the title — or,

rather, how it sounds today — Whitehead's airship was a small glider and no pretense was made otherwise. The basic importance of this forgotten (if ever real) feat to UFOlogy is the deadly serious tone of the article and the amorphous nature of the term "airship" in the 19th Century press. With such caveats in mind, let us consider the specifics of Dr. Winkler's airships.

Most prominent among these is an airship story appearing in the *N.Y. Times* of December 2, 1897. Dr. Winkler apparently is willing to consider Sir Hiram Maxim as the inventor of an "airship," which made a "round-trip flight between San Francisco and Cleveland in three days in the summer of 1897." Assuming a perfect crow's flight, this would require an average speed of over 100 mph: a performance that no subsequent lighter than air machine ever achieved as a *maximum speed!* Alas, neither Sir

*Hiram nor the Times* ever again referred to this epochal achievement.

In fact, the Maxim design is reminiscent of one proposed by a "C.A. Smith," as recounted in the *San Francisco Call* of November 25, 1896.<sup>1</sup> The "technical" (Dr. Winkler's term) details are all but identical. Oddly, however, there is no mention of the leadership of the world famed Maxim. A strange reticence, *n'est pas?* This "Maximally" important article from the *Times*, contradicting as it does all subsequent aviation histories, is worthy of close scrutiny. For example,

It has at last been discovered who the incorporators of the Atlantic and Pacific Aerial Navigation Company are. The company, which is offered by C.A. Smith, President (sic), and M.A. Terry, Secretary (sic), both of San Francisco, was organized to manufacture the air-ship of Hiram S. Maxim, inventor of the Maxim gun.

(continued on next page)

## UFO FLASHBACK - 1897

Printed in the Sept. 14, 1897 issue of *The Hamilton Spectator*, an article reported that C.W. Spencer, superintendent of the eastern division of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and his assistant, Thomas Hay, were "admiring the clear, starlit heavens" from the observation car, near Gravel River, Ont., when they saw "A something in the sky."

They gave details of a large white light, and above it a red and a white light. When the airborne object turned, the red light became blue and a "row of our lights was seen terminated by a circle or ellipse of a dozen lights, in the midst of which was the dark body of the air ship."

All the elements of other-world mystery were there, but the observers were not taken in by science fiction, then in its infancy in those days. The paper reported that the lights had the "steady clearness of acetylene or electric light". Spencer and Hay "could form no other opinion than that it was an air ship." The writer concluded: "It is quite possible that some inventor has set to work quietly and unostentatiously and thus put his theories into practice in the world; and if he hasn't come to grief in the wilds of Lake Superior, we shall soon know that air navigation has been accomplished on Canadian territory." (*Wingham Advance-Times, Ont., July 27, 1967*)

M. JAN - 83



## Airships? Continued

"At last" the "incorporators" have been "discovered!" As the identities of the APANC founders were printed in the *Crocker Langley San Francisco (City) Director* of April 1897, this is fair warning that the *Times'*, anonymous "persons connected with the company" were untrustworthy. Or worse.

The *Crocker Langley* series offers a small insight into the workings of APANC. The firm did not exist as of the spring of 1896, but arose after the publicity of the original California airship sightings. In 1896, Charles A. Smith was listed in the directory as a "physician." The 1897 edition, published in April of that year, finds him president of APANC. May of 1898 finds Smith still listed as head of the struggling enterprise, but the corporation is now located in the residence of its new secretary, John E. Morson. By 1899, the end has come and Dr. Smith has returned to the healing arts.

Thus, the *Times* story ran as the company's dissolution neared. Most probably, Maxim and the secret flight were introduced by the "persons" in a last attempt to bilk a few dollars more. Those with lingering doubts should study the purported engineering with

...naptha for the (lone!) engine ....(to)... be stored in cases, which are supposed to be enough to drive the ship around the earth without replenishing the tanks.

If Mr. Berliner<sup>2</sup> is skeptical of this material, his suspicions are only too well founded!

Writing previously in the March issue of the *Journal* (No. 169), Dr. Winkler correctly identifies the craft of "Prof. Barnard" as being powered by a bicycle drive device — powered by the pilot's legs! Small wonder its performance had been "achieved or excelled by at least fifty other contrivances!" In passing it should be noted that the speed of the Barnard ship, as given in the article, is comparable with that of the first dirigible ever to successfully return to its place of launch. This latter, *La France*, was quickly scrapped because it was unable to fly except on the calmest of days. However admirable

Barnard's pluck, a successful flight would only have been luck: such an "airship" holds no answers for UFOlogy.

The *Pegasus* letter (or letters?) is mentioned by Dr. Winkler as having wide currency in the contemporary press. This is an especially interesting craft with a speed of 150 m.p.h. — and steam power. As John A. Keel acidly notes, here is an answer as to why UFOs are so often reported taking on water?<sup>3</sup> An apparently unrelated message of distress from "The Airship Travelers" — Arthur B. Coats of Laurel, Miss., C.C. Harris of Gulfport, Miss., and C.W. Rich of Richburg, Miss., received no acknowledgment from their "people."<sup>4</sup> Other airship tales abound, but — regardless of the number of "details" — there is no objective confirmation.

With my own (cautious) attitude made plain, here are a (very) few words of encouragement for the romantics. My own great-grandfather was supposedly wowed to from a passing airship. A dirigible would often move up and down in a choppy motion in even moderate weather; this does inevitably bring to mind the familiar "falling leaf motion." In 1884, an airship crash was reported with particulars startlingly like those which later afflicted hydrogen lift lighter-than-air craft (LTA's).<sup>5</sup>

For historical research, the *New York Times* is normally the newspaper of first choice, as the "old girl" is indexed back to 1853. Unfortunately, "she" has always had an aversion for man-bites-dog stories, so UFO reports are few and far between (try "airship," "balloon," etc. in the *Index* volumes). Those wishing to research 19th Century airships should consult Gregory's *Union List of Newspapers 1821-1936* and *Newspapers on Microfilm*; these will indicate which newspapers near the incident have survived. Normally, the local library will be able to order a microfilm copy free or at very nominal cost. Unhappily, not all newspapers circulate — even on microfilm — while others have never been copied. And remember that the *Union List* was printed over 40 years ago!

In summary, unsubstantiated news accounts of successful airships

prove nothing. Chapter 10 of Daniel Cohen's book demonstrates that science fiction hoaxes were hardly unknown in the 19th Century U.S. press. And liars, of course. If not for Jerome Clark, the Hamilton "cownapping" would still be regarded as a connection between the murkier side of UFOs, then and now. Those unwilling to trust skeptic Cohen on the condition of the period press are referred to the journalism department of the local college or university.

As for a secret invention, Cohen convincingly quotes Thomas Edison, "It is absurd to imagine that a man would construct a successful airship and keep the matter secret."<sup>6</sup> Any such device would have had to elude aviation historians for more than 80 years. The National Security Agency would gaze in admiration at such a shroud of secrecy. Airships? To quote Scrooge, "Bah, humbug!"

### A Note on Dr. Winkler's Notes

There is an apparent discrepancy in the dates attributed to the *New York Times*: the *NYT Index* for 1894-1898 lists stories about Barnard as appearing on May 7 and May 11. Nonetheless, I was unable to find the latter on the microfilm copy. Could the citations for "*Tribune*" and *NYT* have been confused? For those wishing to check further, see page 722 of the *Index* volume under "airships."

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# UFOs OVER ARKANSAS: PART I

By William D. Leet  
(Arkansas State Director)  
(© 1982 by William D. Leet)

Bennie Chalker and his 16-year-old son, Brent, were sitting in the living room of their home on Chapel Hill, 3 miles north of Nashville, Arkansas, enjoying the peace and quiet of the evening. The day was Tuesday, February 3, 1981. The duties of the day had been accomplished and its cares set aside, and dusk had settled down from the sky to rest for the night on the woods and hills. Wife and mother, Bonnie Chalker, was in Texarkana but would soon come home to join Bennie and Brent. All was well.

Then it struck them! The thundering-earthquaking charge of a freight train but magnified many times louder was right over their house! Bennie and son dashed out the door to see a huge "boomerang" of orange-red lights slowly flying northward at a low altitude of 100 to 200 feet. After observing the other-world visitor for about 2 minutes, they drove their pick-up to the crest of the hill by the church there, studying the apparition for another 7 or 8 minutes. No figure or outline of the stranger

could be discerned, but the boomerang impression was made by the six rectangular lights. There were three to the right and three on the left, but close together and forming the boomerange shape. No body was visible, or engines, propellers, tail, wings, or Federal Aviation Administration-required navigation lights. There were no anti-collision strobe lights which all large aircraft and most light airplanes display. You've seen them—they seem to revolve and zap you right in the eye with a white flash.

The time of the Chalkers' sighting was about 6:45 p.m., and about that time a Nashville High School teacher at home saw a similar craft flying northward. Another Nashville High teacher, Joe Martin, who instructs Vocational Agriculture, was hunting a few miles to the north and about 7:00 p.m. observed the northward course of bodiless rectangular lights, five in number. Scores, perhaps hundreds, of people saw the out-of-this-world apparition this recent night, at Ben Lomond, Nashville, Dierks, Um-

pire, and Langley. It undoubtedly was an unidentified flying object (UFO). Where they come from and what they are nobody knows, but we do know what they are not. We know that they are not manmade, and that they are not natural or normal to our planet, and that they are under intelligent control.

UFOs must be something new, some people say, coming around since 1947 when Kenneth Arnold saw "flying saucers" skipping along the valley past Mount Rainier in Washington State, but UFOs have been with us a long, long time, and according to documentation quite awhile in Arkansas.

In the years 1896 and 1897 a "Great Air Ship" was seen in the skies from America's Pacific Coast to the East. At that time, dirigibles had not become operational and there were no airplanes or helicopters. Commencing at Sacramento, California, the flying craft was seen by thousands of people across the nation all the way

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## Bigfoot, Continued

footprints and they disappear."

At times, according to Rose, Frank will be watching TV when suddenly he will walk outside in a trancelike state as if he is being summoned. Strange things are happening inside and around their house as well. During one occasion a large bright light appeared over their house and illuminated it, then it suddenly disappeared. Just the opposite occurred about a week later when one afternoon as Rose was cleaning, the house suddenly became pitch black. She went outside to find the sky clear of clouds and the sun shining brightly. When she looked back into the house it still remained dark.

A few weeks later Rose got up at

about 3 a.m. to get a drink of water. Suddenly the livingroom lit up like daylight even through no lights were switched on. The family members have heard sounds like someone going up the stairway, even though no one was there, and a strange shadowy figure has crossed their kitchen on several occasions. The Unidentified lights have now been seen in daylight as well as night, and in daylight are so bright they illuminate nearby trees.

As of March 1982, "Mystery" is still around. It is now making visits to both the Simpson and Smith residents. Our research team is closely monitoring the events, and we hope to set up remote devices to try and gather scientific data as the incidents occur. Mrs. Simpson and Mrs.

Smith and other residents in the area who have experienced some of the occurrences are genuinely frightened. Frank feels compelled to find an answer to "Mystery." As he stated to me recently, "I've got this feeling that he's going to get me, I'm going to get him, or we're going to get together."

(Stan Gordon is the Director of the Pennsylvania Association For the Study of the Unexplained, an all-volunteer, non-profit research unit made up of specialists from fields of science, engineering, and medicine, who are making an openminded study of unexplained events. The organization's mailing address is 64 Oakhill Avenue, Greensburg, PA 15601.)

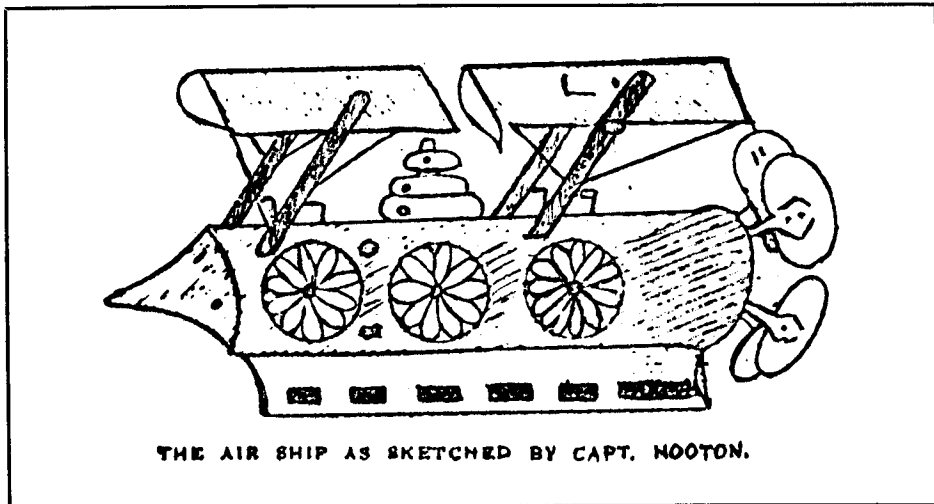
## Arkansas, Continued

to the Atlantic Coast. According to the newspaper accounts of the period, the airship was observed by crowds of people over San Francisco, St. Louis, and big cities eastward. On its course the great airship did not ignore Arkansans. It was closely observed and described by some of our forefathers, one of whom was Captain James Hooton, the highly respected conductor on the Iron Mountain Railroad. For the *Arkansas Gazette* of April 22, 1897, Conductor Hooton provided not only a sketch of the celebrated airship but a detailed description of it and its crew as well. A condensed version of Hooton's narrative follows.

I had gone down to Texarkana to bring back a special, and knowing that I would have some eight to ten hours to spare at Texarkana, I went to Homan to do a little hunting. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when I reached that place. The sport was good, and before I knew it, it was after 6 o'clock when I started to make my way back toward the railroad station. As I was tramping through the brush my attention was attracted by a familiar sound, a sound for all the world like the working of an air pump on a locomotive. I went at once in the direction of the sound, and there in an open space of some five or six acres, I saw the object making the noise.

I decided at once that this was the famous airship seen by so many people about the country. There was a medium-sized looking man aboard and I noticed that he was wearing smoked glasses. He was tinkering around what seemed to be the back end of the ship, and as I approached I was too dumbfounded to speak. He looked at me in surprise, and said: "Good day sir: good day." I asked: "Is this the air ship?" and he replied, "Yes, sir." Whereupon three or four other men came out of what was apparently the keel of the ship. A close examination showed that the keel was divided into two parts terminating in front like the sharp edge of a knife, in fact, the entire front end of the ship terminated in a knife-like edge, while the sides of the ship bulged gradually toward the middle, and then receded.

There were three large wheels on each side made of some bending metal and arranged so that they became concave as they moved forward. "I beg your pardon sir," I said, "the noise sounds a good deal like a Westinghouse air brake." "Perhaps it does, my friend: we are using condensed air and aeroplanes, but you will know more later on."



"All ready, sir!" someone called out, when the party all disappeared below. I observed that just in front of each wheel a two-inch tube began to spurt air on the wheels, and they commenced revolving. The ship gradually arose with a hissing sound. The aeroplanes suddenly sprang forward, turning their sharp ends skyward, then the rudders at the end of the ship began to veer to one side, and the wheels revolved so fast that one could scarcely see the blades. In less time than it takes to tell you, the ship had gone out of sight.

This drawing I have made you is the best I can do under the circumstances. I consider I was fortunate in seeing the ship. You may add that she pumped while standing still, like the air pump of an engine. One particular feature I remember is that what I would call the cowcatcher was sharp as the blade of a knife and almost as pointed as a needle. There was no bell or bell rope about the ship that I could discover, like I should think every well regulated air locomotive should have.

There are some dubious items in the good Captain's account of his meeting with the airship and its pilot and crew, such as his observation about the want of a bell and bell rope. All the same, the "Great Air Ship" was seen by tens of thousands of Americans across the continent, and Captain Hooton's description did not vary noticeably from those of other witnesses.

The wave or "flap" of sightings of the Great Air Ship of 1909-1910 hit Arkansas in this *Arkansas Gazette* item Dec. 15, 1909:

AIRSHIP FLIES NEAR LITTLE ROCK, PERHAPS—A.W. Norris of Mablevale, road overseer of District No. 8, is of the opinion that an airship passed over his residence at about 10 o'clock Monday

night. Mr. Norris states that he was standing in his doorway when a strange light appeared, apparently about 300 feet above him, traveling south at a rapid rate of speed and disappeared a moment or two later in the darkness. He said that the light had the appearance of a searchlight similar to those used on automobiles and it rose and fell like a bird in flight. The night was cloudy, which precludes the possibility of the light having been a star or any astronomic phenomena.

The erroneous and sometimes deceptive "explanations" of UFOs did not have their inception in 1949 with the Air Force Project Blue Book, which fronted as an investigative agency but actually was a propaganda office debunking UFO reality. "Balloon" was a standard "explanation" of unearthly UFO activities, as were "birds," "temperature inversions," "sun dogs," "ball lightning," and "swamp gas." The *Times Record* of Fort Smith, however, beat Project Blue Book to the punch by four decades with the "balloon" jump-at-conclusion in its edition of Dec. 22, 1909.

SAW A FLYING MACHINE—Many people were interested watchers Wednesday about 12 o'clock of a quite large balloon which sailed over this city at a very great height. The pupils of Belle Point school were sure that it was some of the noted aerial travelers in a flying machine. It was in reality a tenantless balloon, oblong in shape and its height from earth was estimated to be as much as three-fourths of a mile.

The normal human reaction 73 years ago to unidentified flying objects, and that of some people today, is to

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## Arkansas, Continued

dismiss them as familiar, commonplace things and go on about one's business. There is slight chance in 1982 of resolving the foregoing sighting of 1909, but ufologists today question the newspaper reporter's conclusion that the "balloon—almost 4,000 feet above ground level—was "tenantless;" he stated no way of knowing this. His remark that the object was "oblong" (racetrack-shaped) indicates that it was not a free balloon, which would have been spherical or of teardrop form.

It should be noted that Project Blue Book was not the first to misinform the public that UFOs were observed only by those who had tarried too long at the bar. The *Times Record* of Jan. 20, 1910, carried a tongue in cheek report of an Arkansas sighting:

Paragould people declare an air ship passed over their town a few nights ago. The strange craft was about 1000 feet from the earth and carried a powerful headlight. Ships of this kind are common over this way. They are usually seen by people who keep late hours.

Three day later, the same paper could not resist one more bit of editorial jest:

Why the people of Paragould saw an air ship the other night is easily explained. The officers over there are lax in the enforcement of the liquor laws. The objects seen were only "schooners" floating in an atmosphere of scintillating effervescent bubbles.

The *Arkansas Gazette* on Jan. 17, 1910 had reported the Paragould "airship" as carrying three or four passengers, and that in addition to the "powerful headlight" it was white and "brilliantly lighted." There was conjecture by the reporter that the "strange airship" seen at Paragould was the same one that passed over Chattanooga, Tenn., three successive days. The Jan. 21 edition of the *Gazette* made another contribution to the 1909-1910 UFO flap over Arkansas:

MYSTERIOUS AIR SHIP PASSES OVER MEMPHIS—Darts Across the River and Is Lost in Arkansas Air—Prominent People See Mysterious Stranger—Special to the

*Gazette*—Memphis, Tenn., Jan. 20—An airship passed over Memphis at 8 o'clock this morning flying east to west by south. It was seen by Joseph Graham, Jr. of the county register's office, Thomas Boyle, a prominent attorney; Mrs. Virginia Frazer Boyle, the noted Southern poet and writer, and others living in the eastern part of the city.

The machine was very high in the air and seemed traveling at a high rate of speed. Just after crossing the Mississippi river in Arkansas' air it veered slightly to the south and was soon lost.

The airship was, it is estimated going faster than any railroad train ever traveled.

It is believed by many that it was the Tillinghast machine, which was seen around Boston and cities in Maine several weeks ago.

The "Tillinghast machine" was the title given to one or more UFOs observed nights over Massachusetts (not Maine) because a Mr. Wallace E. Tillinghast of Worcester, Mass., claimed to have invented the "marvelous aeroplane." When the Worcester Board of Trade demanded that Tillinghast display his "airship" or shut up, nothing more was heard from the gentleman.

Research of Arkansas newspapers discloses no UFO activity in the state—or at least none reported as such—from the flap of 1909-1910 until Kenneth Arnold's historic encounter popped the lid off Pandora's box of "flying saucers" in 1947. This writer however, obtained for (MUFON) the report of a startling intrusion which took place Oct. 15, 1935 at Mena in Polk County. Miss Esther Cherry, music teacher, was sitting on her porch when a strange object caught her eye. She relates that "a round, golden UFO" approached from her right and hovered about a minute only 100 feet away from her, putting her in "a state of cold paralysis." Miss Cherry's MUFON UFO report continues:

My recollections are that I saw this object in the distance, and thought it was a falling star or meteor. Tried to get up out of my chair and go inside but could not move. My body became cold, and I could not get up out of my chair for some time after the object was out of sight.

Before Kenneth Arnold's "flying

saucer" confrontation in the valley near Mt. Rainier, Washington, June 24, 1947, there had been numerous reports during World War II of "foo-fighters," which American Intelligence thought were advanced German weapons, and the Germans believed were secret American weapons. The foo-fighters turned out to be UFOs, but my B-17 Flying Fortress crew and I had no way of knowing this when a luminous, amber object appeared just off our left wingtip during a combat mission in that war. (Editor's note: Mr. Leet's account of this sighting appears in No. 133, Jan-Feb. 1979).

The hurricane of UFO sightings left the skies of war for the U.S.A. soon after the end of WWII, its arrival heralded by pilot Kenneth Arnold's professional calculation of nine "flying saucers" skipping past Mount Rainier at 1,200 mph. The storm was felt in Arkansas only three days later, June 27, 1947, a Mountain Home resident spotting a "glistening, flashing round object" which came from the northeast and disappeared in the southern sky. Other early reports came from the vicinity of Fayetteville, describing glowing disks traveling at high speeds at various altitudes.

On July 5th the *Texarkana Gazette* published the following front page story:

FLYING SAUCERS AGAIN ARE IN THE AIR—TWO TEXARKANA RESTAURANT OPERATORS SPY MYSTERIOUS DISCS AFTER BASEBALL GAME

The mysterious flying saucers were in the air again Thursday night—the third consecutive night in which Texarkanians have reported the silver colored disc flashing through the skies.

Latest reports came from two local restaurant operators, Charley Pappas, operator of the White House, and J.C. Jackson, operator of the Two States Coffee Shop.

The two men declared one of the saucers flew over Elm street immediately after a ball game at Burnett Park late Thursday night. As they were returning from the game, Jackson declared, the object flew directly over them in an easterly direction.

"It was about four hundred feet high and

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## Arkansas, Continued

was going at a fair rate of speed," Jackson asserted. "It had one light on it, and the light was continuous. It didn't blink. Otherwise, it looked exactly like the other ones that have been reported."

Jackson and Pappas brought to nine the number of persons who have reported seeing the strange discs winging around this area including over downtown Texarkana.

The next few days, according to an Associated Press dispatch carried in Arkansas newspaper, numerous UFO sightings were made at DeQueen, El Dorado, Gurdon, and Little Rock. The *Arkansas Gazette* of July 6 stated that Henry Seay reported three "flying discs" on two occasions traveling at high speeds and various altitudes, glowing in the twilight, at Fayetteville.

No records of the alien objects were found from that time until the flap of the 1950's.

A startling news story in the July 11, 1950 issue of the *Arkansas Gazette* was based on a semi-official release by the Navy. Two pilots saw visually and with their airplanes' radars an unknown gizmo "shaped something like a World War I helmet seen from the side." The planes, on a training flight near Osceola, tracked the invader 8 miles before it vanished. One of the pilots, Lt. J.W. Martin, described the odd craft as "about 25 to 45 feet across and about seven feet high." The pursuit was said to be "hopeless."

It was in July of 1952 that dozens of UFOs stunted over Washington, D.C. The alien barnstormers performed for thousands of ground-watchers and scores of pilots, and were tracked by ground radar and radar on the Air Force fighter planes, but made a mockery of the efforts to overtake them. The Hot Springs *Sentinel-Record* announced a possibly related event in its edition of July 30: "Six See Saucers at Hot Springs." A Mr. G. Clark, one of two witnesses to permit release of his name, was quoted as declaring "a white ball of fire with a red tail flew over the city."

Seventeen-year-old Miss Ruby McBay "knew it had to be something from space" when the rotating blue,

red, and yellow lights caught her eye that evening in early April 1957. She and two girl friends had just driven into the McBays' driveway at Mineral Springs when they saw a silver, domed-saucer hovering over a pond only 300 feet away and 75 feet above the water. According to the interview and MUFON report form the present Mrs. Ruby McBay Nelson gave me, she could not be certain whether the rotation was by the bright-colored lights or by the "saucer" itself.

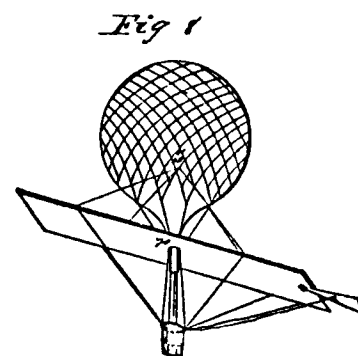
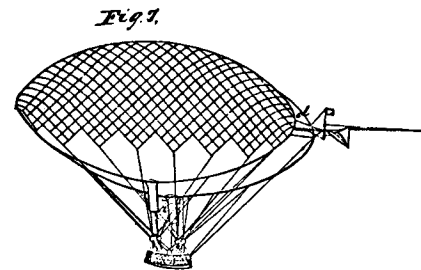
The same year, on the night of Oct. 14, Mr. and Mrs. A.F. Simmons of Camden were driving on U.S. Highway 79 between Pine Bluff and Stuttgart. At about 10 o'clock they saw an extremely bright light "about the size of a washtub" moving through the sky. As the mysterious light approached, the car engine died, the lights failed, and the auto was drawn to the side of the road as though a giant magnet tugged it there. After about 4 minutes, the powerful, apparently electromagnetic, effects ceased and the Simmonses resumed their journey.

The late 1950's and early 1960's were not busy times for UFOs, although there were scattered sightings. The *Arkansas Democrat* in January, 1959 told the following:

Hundreds of Dumas residents reportedly viewed an unidentified flying object...from 5 p.m. until 6 p.m. The UFO moved rapidly in a southeasterly direction and, when viewed through binoculars, was said to have "markings" of some type on its surface. Red, yellow and green in color, the object had an oblong shape.

This same news story, published by the *Arkansas Gazette*, stated that Dumas residents expressed a belief that the object "gave off light" rather than reflecting it, looked like an electric light bulb, and took on a reddish glow at dusk. That May the *Democrat* informed the public of another "light bulb type object, only bigger," at Massard. It was seen in other localities and verified by a sheriff's office.

A "question mark-shaped" UFO was widely observed by folks in Arkansas County, Oct. 2, 1963, appearing in a cloudless sky southeast of DeWitt, but hearken to the discoveries of some brave "Flying



"S. Andrews, Aerial Navigation." Patented July 5, 1864. No. 43,449.

Saucer Hunters." In the *Arkansas Democrat* edition of Aug. 3, 1965 we read:

A news director of a Fort Smith radio station, Tony Delaney, reported that he, along with two companions, set up a UFO watch on Wildcat Mountain and spotted three separate sightings. The group reportedly watched four objects for about five minutes, two objects for about ten minutes, and a single object for an undisclosed length of time. Delaney, using binoculars, described the objects as "brilliant blue and green but changing to a brilliant white under acceleration." The objects traveled right, left and up and down.

On through the summer and fall of 1965, disclosures of bizarre craft and their superhuman maneuvers in Arkansas skies were ever so many. Objects with multi-colored lights were seen as well as metallic-looking machines with details such as lighted "windows." Reports tapered off after August but occasional sightings continued throughout the year. (To be continued).

## Airships, Continued

It is difficult to see how the westward trip against the prevailing winds could be accomplished in less than 2 days when powered flight of balloons was in its infancy. While the schedule for the trip to Honolulu stretches the imagination, the schedule for another airship reported by the *Pittsburgh Press* is an outright lie. Here the timing of a flight is given as Jacksonville, Florida 9:43; Havana, Cuba 9:47 and Duluth, Iowa 9:50.

The *Dallas Morning News* of April 19th contained a unique account involving a crash landing of an airship with retrieval of the pilot's body in the Aurora, Texas area. Part-time reporter E. E. Haydon even provided information that the pilot originated from Mars and had on his person papers with unknown hieroglyphics. No material evidence regarding the airship, pilot, or his papers was ever recovered and the report of the incident is regarded as a hoax. While a few other hoaxes were identified in the newspapers, their perpetrations were relatively simple-minded and rather weakly documented.

Among the more curious accounts of airships is the one provided by George Dunlap via the *Dallas Morning News* of May 16th. Dunlap indicated he inspected a 75-foot long steerable, powered airship near Lake Charles, Louisiana. The airship supposedly carried four passengers in its travels through Texas and Mexico and had an inventor named Wilson and engineer, Waters. Although Dunlap indicates he was invited for an ascent, he declined. Incredibly, Wilson was reported as building a total of three airships, the other two supposedly in Arizona and Mexico. Could one of these airships have been the one so widely reported by the *Dallas Morning News* on April 16th and 17th when it was reported that the pilot was seen working on his craft outside the Dallas area?

## Ballooning History

In both Europe and America balloonists had been making ascensions with passengers for more than a

century. As early as 1783 Jean F. P. Rozier and Marquis d'Arlandes made a free-flight trip at LaMulette, France and 10 years later the first balloon flight in the U.S. was launched from Philadelphia. Jean P. Blanchard flew 15 miles across the Delaware River and reached more than 1 mile in altitude. But then what happened between 1793 and 1896 in America does not seem to have been documented in much detail. In Europe, however, there is considerable documentation during the period. By 1880 the first powered airship was flown in Leipzig, Germany by Wolfert and Baumgarten, but it ended in disaster. Even up to 1897 Europeans were having difficulties with their attempts to achieve successful, controlled, powered flight. In 1884 C. Renard and A. C. Krebs flew their 170-foot-long "La France." The balloon returned to its starting point after achieving a speed of 12 mph. By 1897 a European dirigible had been powered by a Daimler engine, but unfortunately their trip ended too in disaster as their engine emitted sparks which ignited the hydrogen gas in the balloon. In the same year another partially successful flight ended in disaster when a Swede, Solomon A. Andree, left Danes Island in an ambitious attempt to cross the North Pole. Because of incidents like these the *New York Herald* wrote on April 15th:

In Europe there are at least a dozen well-known scientists working on the problem (of a powered, steerable airship) and many half successful effects of flights have been made.

It is difficult to compare European and American achievements before 1897 since American reports are not as complete. Nevertheless, American flights also seemed to have their difficulties. Numerous instances of landings were cited by Hanlon, Jacques Vallee, and this writer, and of all of these, five were reported to be for repairs. However, only the *St. Louis Republic* for April 14th reported a major crash landing, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Here G. W. Somers and W. Chadburn witnessed a blow-up of the airship which showered propeller blades, electric wire and steel

splinters.

A measure of the ballooning activity from late 1896 to the spring of 1897 is the number of sightings and landings reported. Hanlon specifies 150 sightings in 19 states, and this writer adds 1 sighting in each of 4 additional states and Cuba and Mexico from newspaper sources. Vallee and Hanlon documented 22 landings in 12 states, and this writer adds 13 additional landings in 8 states. In America there were at least a dozen inventors working on the problem, however, most were not as well known as were the European inventors. It is hardly a surprise that the state of dirigible technology in the U.S. was as advanced as it was with the long and involved history of ballooning in Europe and America.

## Early Interpretations

To the detriment of UFOlogy and the history of ballooning, one of the first analyses of the mysterious airships of 1896-1897 was made by the debunker Donald Menzel. In his customary glib style the airships were:

... created from imagination — imagination inflated by the newspaper stories. As in the 1947 saucer scare, hoaxers and jokers ready to capitalize on the event, quickly entered the picture."

Naturally this same approach to the phenomena of 1896-1897 was taken by another debunker, Philip K. Klass. His version is that:

When the public has been conditioned by the news media to believe that there are strange flying objects in the skies many persons will report having seen such objects — even when the objects do not really exist.

Apparently Menzel and Klass would have us believe that half of the major newspapers in the country are not capable of differentiating between a real phenomenon and a psychological one.

In keeping with their general approach to UFOs, Menzel and Klass are not only glib, they are absurd. In spite of the activity with powered, controlled, elongated airships in the areas of San Francisco, Omaha,

(continued on next page)

## Airships, Continued

Chicago, Dallas and Nashville, Klass writes:

At the time of the rash of mysterious airships sightings there were no large powered craft in the U.S. . . . Such things as airplanes or airships simply did not exist.

Menzel of course has his own explanation of how thousands of people over the U.S. had erred even though they saw details with and without optical aid:

The dark, cigar-shaped gas bag in many cases was only a lenticular cloud or mirage, which would have escaped notice except for the special significance momentarily attached to an object of this shape.

The view of the 1896-1897 phenomena taken by Vallee is different from that of Menzel and Klass, and not as glib. Vallee suggests that the airship was a figment of the imagination, and in 2 of the 21 landing cases he discusses in connection with the airship, he shows that there are similar circumstances in Medieval annals of folklore from the British Isles. Vallee also attempts to show that 4 of the remaining 19 landing events are fairy-tale-like. Most of the interpretations of the flap found in the general UFO literature, however, take the view that the airships are not an explained phenomenon. Hanlon closes his *Flying Saucer Review* article of 1970 with the statement:

It is clear that the origin of the airship is still very much an open issue. It is also clear that the mystery surrounding its appearance at that particular time in history has deepened.

What is so surprising of the analyses mentioned above by Menzel, Klass, Vallee, and Hanlon is that none considered a conventional man-made object explanation. Debunkers and UFOlogists are represented, but no one chose to treat the mountain of compelling data as just part of the history of ballooning.

At the time of the airship sightings there did not appear to be any outspoken debunkers with the reputation of Menzel and Klass. But indeed, there were a few astronomers who simply suggested without much technical defense that thousands upon thousands of people could not distin-

guish between a point of light such as Venus, Mars, Alpha Orion, or Betelgeuse, and structured aircraft. Although numerous people saw details of the construction of the ships, including passengers, and although many reliable witnesses made observations with optical aid, the astronomers failed to explain how the observers could have so erred.

Perhaps more convincing than the technical arguments of the man-made nature of the flap are the contemporary opinions of reliable sources. Some of the first supportive commentary comes from Pritchitt in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* of April 10th and 14th.

There is too much corroborative evidence and it comes from too many quarters to treat the matter any other way (than an airship).

The newspaper also reported that the populace itself was convinced of the true nature of the phenomenon:

It is general belief that an airship is floating over the states of Missouri, Illinois, Iowa and Kansas . . . The majority ridicule the idea that anything beyond the natural has been seen.

Even the French newspaper *Figaro* commented on the believability of the American reports:

The news seems to be more than a canard, seeing the details and preciseness in which are related in the (*New York Herald*) the exploits of this airship.

Although the *Philadelphia Inquirer* carried little on the airship, in the April 17th issue they comment:

Airship stories of an apparently entirely reliable character are coming in in rapid succession and all seem to hang together.

## Conclusions

More than 3,000 newspaper issues from among three dozen titles covering the period during late 1896, and between mid-March and mid-May of 1897 were searched for this article. It is very likely that considerably more data remains to be uncovered on the subject of the mysterious airships from newspapers alone. Further, Lucius Farish has informed me that he has had for some time in his possession several hundred pages of airship

material. But, although there is much work remaining to be done in constructing the story of airships in the U.S. during the 19th century, the work done to this point is sufficient for this writer to deduce the true nature of the mysterious airships of 1896-1897. It seems much more reasonable to interpret the airship sightings simply as airships which were various models in the development of the dirigible. Consequently these airships should no longer remain in the realm of UFOs.

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have been satellites know what I saw!

Mr. Kor, you re! we are not the onl the vast universe astronomers both seemingly limitless at least 100,000,000 that can indeed be every way!

Therefore there i that we can be the the universe!

So what if the evidence that flyin have my own visu what about that s found in Florida?

Why should the their occupants act have been observing then they know th cannot or will not ac lower themselves to who like you, non-believers? Mr. K are from the same pa Not all evolved at th space travel; therefo are now taking water are new to space expl

Yes, the saucers a continually because longer afraid to repor seen.

The most revealin are the least verifiabl that men and women offices in our land ha I do not claim to b

## The 1890s "Flap"

By Jerry Mathers

The first flying saucer "flap" did not occur in this country in 1947 as is commonly thought. It occurred in the 1890s!

That's right, the Gay Nineties. While the advent of heavier than air flight was near (1903), and hot-air balloons no rarity in civilized areas, whatever was maneuvering through our skies throughout 1896 and 1897 was no primitive, uncontrollable balloon.

Thousands of people from all walks of life from coast to coast reported a strange "airship" flying low overhead. Reports were particularly common in the Midwest, and included sightings of airship occupants and even the kidnapping of a cow!

The log of these airships -- for there had to be at least two -- can be traced from coast to coast and border to border.

At Oakland, Cal., some streetcar passengers reported a winged cigar-shaped ship that sent out a bright stream of light. This same description would be heard again and again across the nation.

In late January, 1897, a second ship was seen over Montreal for a week, and also spotted near Albany, N.Y. The Chicago Chronicle on Feb. 2, said: "A strange star or light in the heavens has been puzzling the people of Montreal for a week." The light appeared a little after 5 p.m., disappeared a bit after 7. It was thought to be a military balloon used in maneuvers.

(To Be Continued in the next issue.)

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does any other know of! y for you. You gh opinion of belittle UFO

Newsletter

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found and read zine. I noticed or Has His Say" e. I wonder if er tried passing heart. Some of orse than that! u "burn all the s you're rather ust) about your mple, you gave the Thomas it was proved not "cover up ing a skyhook m Wilmington heast of where ie crash of the 'alcutta (after 3 was discovered

ase where the ball lightning fireball(?). The r got too close ld have had rother "likely" up!). At any

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rate the pilots bailed out from fear, bad instrument readings, etc. Buffalo flight 542 (1959) crashed and scorched the windows, etc. An airplane stall was the cause.

I'm getting our librarian to cancel their subscription, and I know I can.

Now try to take me apart. If you send me any "documented" U.F.O. cases I'd take a crack at solving them as I am a skeptic.

Happy Fishing,  
J.B. Bennett  
10913 Candlelight Lane  
Potomac, Md. 20854

● Thanks. You've been very helpful.—Rap.

Dear Ray:

I wish to thank you for all the intellectual stimulation and sense of "awe and wonder" you brought into my young manhood.

After living a little boy's life in my father's shadow for a full half century in "Smalltown USA", I am now blissfully wed to a fellow bookworm.

As for your mags, I can't help saying they were a million times more informative and interesting back in the good old pulp days. All this overpriced, slick, digest-sized literature

is a poor substitute for the Argosy, Bluebook and Thrilling WONDER Stories of my youth.

What puzzles me is why your former s-f authors have developed a "blind spot" where UFO's are concerned. During the depression you

made a living with the hack writing about spaceships and deathrays. Now that the "Buck Rogers" world is upon us, so many of you take the contrary head in the sand attitude.

Keel, Charroux, Asimov and any number of others, including that stuff shirted Sagan, all take such perverse pride in being unbelievers.

My 82 year old father vividly remembers the little guy he saw crouched in the corner at the controls of a little "orange crate" shaped vehicle cruising silently and serenely over the northern Indiana landscape as a boy. This was evidently part of the Great Air Ship Flap of 1897.

How do you just shrug off a mountain of evidence from all climes and centuries? Ever stop to think how much spaceship lore was lost in all of those senseless, barbaric book burnings?

That Siberian "Meteor"? National Enquirer interviewed 129 survivors of that fateful morning. They claimed it CHANGED DIRECTION AS THOUGHT TRYING FOR AN UNINHABITED REGION THAT DAWN. We just had one of those (what I term Interstate Meteors) out here. The experts keep shoving it further east. It was seen all the way from Alaska to Portland, but at last report was supposed to be down near Ritzville, Wash. With a little imagination, I think we can place it back in Montana. Those two kooks with their "Black Hole" in Science Digest were as WRONG AS YOU CAN

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# PRE-WWI UFOs OVER WESTERN CANADA

Reports are where—and when—you find them, as this historical survey of Canadian cases reveals.

by W. Ritchie Benedict

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to do some extensive research on the paranormal in general and UFOs in particular in the back files of Western Canadian newspapers. For example, I have looked through every single issue of the *Calgary Herald* from 1883 to 1955 and the *Victoria Daily Colonist* from 1858 to 1900. There was a good deal of unexplained traffic in our skies, far more than I had been led to believe.

My first target for research was the 1897 "airship" wave. The United States had a number of sightings in the midwest in April of 1897, but in Canada, it appears that a different schedule was followed—most of the activity was in July-August. A lighted object was witnessed by thousands in Vancouver, British Columbia, in July and something similar occurred in Winnipeg a month later. Interestingly, the pattern had been repeated a year earlier in 1896 with two Indians viewing a balloon-like object in July over B.C. The objects were commonly believed to be experiments by Swedish explorer Andree (who later perished in an ill-fated attempt to cross the North Pole by balloon). Most of the Canadian objects sighted in this period were sketchily defined, although a few observers reported a gondola-like appendage beneath the main body. The 1897 Vancouver "fireship" did appear to have internal lighting.

I found that the 1897 wave in Canada was truly cross-country. In October 1897, a Port Arthur train crew sighted a mystery object that had a number of colored running lights, and in early November, 1897, the *Newfoundland Evening Telegram* reported a huge "balloon" had been spotted over Halifax. I was hopeful that I might be able to find evidence concerning airships over Alberta and Saskatchewan for this period, but to date, I have come up blank. However both the *Edmonton Bulletin* and the *Lethbridge News* ran short pieces in April/May 1897 on the American sightings. The *Edmonton* piece referred to a "mysterious airship hovering around Minneapolis and St. Paul which was illuminated at night with red lights." The account goes on to state: "Half the population of many towns in Iowa saw the vacillating lights swiftly speeding to the west."

The next major event in the early history of Western Canada was on April 12th, 1905. An article in *Yukon World* for May 5 of that year noted that a "peculiar light of intense brilliancy and short duration, illuminated the entire heavens" to the officers of the steamer *Cassiar* who happened to be on duty at 1:45 a.m. when the ship was running down the Johnson Strait. The illu-

mination lasted a full 45 seconds and it was possible to read newspapers by the light that was produced.

Alberta's first UFO seems to have made its appearance on the night of November 18th, 1910 at 3 a.m. In an article in the *Calgary Herald* headlined "Airship, Meteor, or Just Plain Jag," there is a description of something brilliant which left a trace of incandescence many times brighter than the full moon. Some observers felt that a gasoline tank on some sort of aircraft had ignited and exploded.

I came across a brief mention of something unusual in a January 14th, 1911 article on early aviation in Calgary. It was stated that a "mysterious aviator" was seen flying over southern Alberta and western Saskatchewan the previous fall. The writer was puzzled by two factors: why was the machine seen over so many widely separated localities, and why was the speed so "wonderful"? On August 22nd, 1911, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported an early morning "visitor" who appeared at 1:50 a.m. and vanished at 4:10 a.m. It generally resembled an airplane and was reported to "hover" in the locality for several hours. When it finally vanished, the watchers were unable to make out where it went.

Calgary had an unexpected visitor just ten days after the first Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. The old *Calgary News Telegram* on September 17th, 1912 headlined "Mysterious Object Is Puzzling Residents of West End of the City—It is Seen Travelling Over the City at a Tremendous Clip—Blue Light Attached." The article went on to state that a blue light was attached to a long dark body like that of a flying machine. Further on, the reporter says that this object had appeared before over Okotoks but people were unsure whether it was a machine, a strange bird or something else. There is a tantalizing reference to sightings the previous year over Taber, Alberta and Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. The article attributes some of the sightings to an inventor named Baden who was supposed to have invented a flying machine with an attached locomotive headlight, but admitted that nothing had been heard from Baden for some time.

The 1913 *Calgary Herald* carried articles on the British airship wave of January-February that year, but there does not seem to have been anything locally. In early 1915, there were mystery airplanes over the Okanagan region of British Columbia. A man in Calgary in February of 1915 reported "airplane motors" overhead at 4 a.m. and was worried over the possibility of attack by the Germans.

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série de BOUCLES très petites ou plutôt de rotations rapides alternant avec un simple mouvement de trajectoire relativement lent. Le ciel était couvert et le phénomène se détachait sur fond gris foncé ». Venons-en maintenant aux observations les plus remarquables, celles de l'année 1897 dont la plus énigmatique eut lieu aux États-Unis. La presse lui consacra une large place et Charles Fort devait l'insérer plus tard comme une vedette parmi ses « hors la loi » de la Science. Il semble que l'« aéronef » a été vu pour la première fois vers la fin de mars. Il circula au-dessus du territoire américain pendant les trois premières semaines du mois d'avril, car on a des témoignages pour les 9, 11, 16, 17 et 19 de ce mois, et en des lieux fort éloignés les uns des autres : Salt Lake City (Utah), Chicago (Michigan), Saint-Louis (Missouri) à 295 milles de Chicago, Denver (Colorado) à 916 Milles de Saint-Louis, etc...

La forme était celle d'un fuseau paraissant avoir 70 mètres de longueur et 10 mètres de diamètre. Il aurait été muni d'ailerons sur les côtés. D'autre part, il émettait des lumières rouges, blanches et vertes sur les côtés, qui furent interprétées comme des signaux. On observa également des faisceaux lumineux.

Le **New York Herald** du 10 avril 1897, imprimait : « That airship now at Chicago. City excited by the appearance of rapidly moving lights in the sky. Astronomers incredulous. They believe that lights proceed from a star in the constellation of Orion ». Le même journal dans son numéro du 29 mars, relatant ce phénomène observé par les habitants d'Omaha (Nebraska) disait : C'est une tache lumineuse trop grosse pour être un aérostat.

Le **New York Sun** précisait que la luminosité de l'objet était celle de 20 étoiles réunies. Le **Chicago Tribune** cite les témoignages des habitants d'Eldora (Iowa) selon lesquels cet « aéronef » ressemblait à un « immense oiseau d'argent poli ». A Milwaukee il a été vu (par des milliers de personnes) stationnant dans le ciel pendant 15 minutes. Selon d'autres, la lumière était « suspendue à un corps sombre et volumineux de forme ovoïde ».

L'observation du 19 avril faite à Sisterville (Virginie) confirmait les points précédents, attestant également que l'objet était resté en mouvement au-dessus de la ville pendant une dizaine de minutes avant de s'éloigner vers l'est.

En 1952, la presse rappela ces observations de la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, mais ce fut tout. Nous allons en ajouter d'autres, inconnues, en corrélation avec les précédentes et c'en est là l'intérêt.

La première est un phénomène vu dans le ciel de France, et nous en empruntons les détails au **Bulletin de la Société Astronomique de France**, 1897, pp. 334-336 et 412. Ce « bradyte » (ou météore lent) pour reprendre le terme employé, fut d'abord vu à Frontignan, à 9 h 16 du soir : grosseur d'une orange. Couleurs : rouge, bleu, vert, jaune. Se dirige du NO au Sud. Durée 30 secondes. Il est observé à Orange à 9 h 30 : apparaît dans l'étoile bêta du lion, alors à 17° 35' au-dessus de l'horizon. Diamètre environ 4' (un peu plus du 1/10 de la Lune). Vitesse uniforme lente, vers alpha de la Vierge (L'Epi), puis au-dessus du Carré de la Balance, puis un peu au Sud d'alpha du Scorpion (Antarès). Sa vitesse apparente diminue et il disparaît à 6°36' au-dessus de l'horizon. Division en 3 parties au terme de sa course. Vitesse de parcours : 3° par seconde. Forme allongée, couleur jaune brillant.

A Montpellier on le vit vers 21 h 20 ; sa longueur apparente à l'œil était de 1 m 50, et il voyageait horizontalement à une allure très lente. Il était très lumineux, principalement la tête, d'un jaune d'or. La queue, composée de traits plus foncés, se terminait presque en pointe. Il se déplaçait vers l'Ouest et paraissait évoluer dans l'atmosphère proche, tellement il se trouvait bas (à Montpellier).

Enfin, et c'est le plus étrange, vers 23 h, on l'observa en Grande-Bretagne, prenant la direction Sud.

Il ne faut probablement voir que des phénomènes astronomiques dans les observations du 28 octobre 1897, de « bolides à trajectoire sinuëuse » (**Bulletin de la S.A.F.**, 1898, p. 231), d'ailleurs relatées sans détails précis, mais il nous paraît certain que le « bradyte » du mois de juillet vu dans la région méditerranéenne et en Grande-Bretagne était le mystérieux aéronef observé dans le ciel des États-Unis en avril.

Il serait donc nécessaire, à notre avis, de se livrer à un dépouillement systématique des journaux (et des revues astronomiques, bien entendu) pour la période 1896-1897, en étendant cette enquête à tous les pays. Nous sommes persuadés que la récolte de renseignements de toutes sortes serait fructueuse (2).

Terminons par un article titré : « Un phénomène extraordinaire », paru dans le **Bulletin de la S.A.F.** de 1898 (p. 238) :

« Les **Astronomische Nachrichten**, 1898, relatent l'observation faite à Grusswald (Poméranie) le 4 février, du « passage d'un objet noir sur le disque solaire. Plusieurs personnes ont été témoins du phénomène. L'entrée sur le disque eut lieu à 1 h 10 (temps moyen de Berlin) et la sortie à 2 h 10. Avant d'atteindre le limbe solaire, l'objet avait été aperçu depuis un quart d'heure déjà et on continua de le voir pendant plus d'une heure après son passage sur le disque. La direction du mouvement était dans le sens N.-O. Le diamètre apparent de l'objet était de 6' environ ».

On est surpris de constater que les observations étranges enregistrées dans la rubrique des « divers » des revues scientifiques ne sont pas accompagnées de commentaires et l'on devine la gêne des rédacteurs devant quelque chose n'entrant pas dans les normes (3).

Les coïncidences, dans une période de temps, des apparitions anormales successives dans le ciel d'un objet dont la forme, la dimension apparente, l'aspect général, la vitesse de déplacement, etc., sont dans chaque cas très ressemblants constituent une très grande probabilité en faveur de l'hypothèse d'une exploration de près de notre Terre par des êtres venus d'ailleurs.

(1) La première partie de cet article a été publiée dans le n° 33 de la Revue OURANOS (p. 109). Nous publions ici l'article intégral pour les lecteurs qui n'auraient pu se procurer ce numéro.

(2) N.D.L.R. — Nous invitons vivement nos amis et correspondants étrangers à faire des recherches dans ce sens et à nous communiquer leurs découvertes pour publication dans cette Revue.

(3) Dans l'observation du 4 février 1898, on laisse entendre que l'objet passa à proximité du soleil, mais avec un diamètre apparent de 6' ; il nous semble évident que l'objet dans ce cas aurait été invisible, noyé dans la luminosité de l'astre.

C'est donc d'un objet passant à très grande distance de la Terre et se déplaçant à faible vitesse (durée de l'observation : 2 h 15) qu'il s'agit ; ou faut-il supposer que nos astronomes n'ont pas connaissance de planétoïdes satellites de la Terre ?

## Media Hoaxes

by Fred Fedler

Ames: Iowa State University Press,  
1989, 266 pp., hardback, \$27.95.

### Reviewed by Douglas Chapman

If one can cope with Fred Fedler's monotonous writing style, his book *Media Hoaxes* should prove a rewarding grab-bag of fascinating hoaxes from throughout the history of journalism.

Some of the greatest names in literature have turned out amazing outrages. Both Jonathan Swift and Benjamin Franklin put out works which predicted the demises of specific almanac publishers. After the publishers' reported "deaths," Swift and Franklin explained the protests of their "deceased" victims as being those of inept impostors.

Edgar Allan Poe's "factual" story "The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall" detailed a man's travel to the moon by balloon. In 1835, it fooled many; now it is one of his most famous fictions. Even Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" was originally published in *The American Review* in 1845 as if it might be fact. (One could not get Poe to admit one way or the other.)

Fedler does a good job at recreating the rough-and-ready world of 19th century American journalism. With limited news sources, facts did not always stand in the way of a good story. Mark Twain learned various skills in this environment—including practical jokes. Twain once put together an issue of the Virginia City newspaper *Enterprise*, consisting largely of libel of important people, printed only one copy, and sent it to his vacationing boss. That got the man to return to work—in a hurry.

Many know of the Orson Welles "Martian scare" of 1938. Fewer are aware of South American attempts to emulate him. When a station in Santiago, Chile, put out their radio adaptation of *War of the Worlds* in 1944, many were injured. When, in 1949, Station HCQRX in Quito, Ecuador, broadcast their version as a "real" news story about a Martian invasion, panic again resulted. Rioters soon set HCQRX's building afire, and rescuers discovered 20 corpses in the ruins.

*Strange* readers may be interested in the account of the "Winsted wild man," which Fedler says was the creation of Lou Stone, a New England journalist famous for his whimsical stories. In the next issue of *Strange Magazine*, Michael T. Shoemaker will take a detailed look at this case in his column *Back From Limbo*.

Fedler writes that our present standards of journalistic accountability are a development of this century and that

journalists of previous centuries did not subscribe to them. The media still craves novelty, but is—generally—more careful about its work.

The book is full of juicy material, including the 1953 Atlanta, Georgia, flying saucer hoax and T. Walter Williams' creation of news reports—for the *New York Times* during the 1930s—of frequent sightings of sea monsters from the ship *Mauretania*.

*Media Hoaxes* is best dipped into in small doses, but those who do so will find much to inform and amuse them.



*A Milwaukee teen-ager saw this saucer in April of 1967. According to the witness, the object swooped down from his right, then leveled off in flight while emanating a golden glow. After several seconds the UFO soared away*

electricity. It is a wonderful machine and can be stopped and made to stand still in the air anywhere and comes down light as a feather.' "

"Horen lives at the New Exchange Hotel and went to San Francisco Thursday. Some seem to give credence to his story. All admire his abilities as an accomplished story-teller and say he has a marvelous imagination. He sticks to his story and bears the name of a hard-working man."

In our investigations thus far, only two instances have been found wherein the airship crews were of abnormal appearance. The following is one of those cases and is easily the most intriguing of the lot.

The Lansing, Michigan *State Republican*, carried the following story in 1897. Datedlined Williams-

"SAN JOSE, Dec. 1.—The champion airship story of the season is told by John A. Horen, an electrician in the employ of Electrical Improvement Company of this place. Horen says he has a patent on an electrical platinum speaking appliance and that by appointment he went to San Francisco Thursday to see the inventory of the airship who wished to see the appliance. Said Horen: 'We went on horseback to a point on Sandy Beach, where the airship was, got aboard and rose very high. The height was registered by a meter on the ship. The inventor does not count the distance traveled by miles but by degrees. After leaving Sandy Beach Thursday afternoon we traveled westward. Before day next morning we saw lights. The inventor said they were the lamps of Honolulu. We turned east and Saturday evening about dark landed near where we started. The airship rose by means of two propellers. The movement was noiseless and swift. The inventor is 45 years old, but I cannot now tell any news, but the motive power is not steam or



*A high-pitched whine drew a Kentwood, Louisiana resident's attention to this classically-shaped UFO. As he aimed his camera to the sky, the object turned slowly and remained overhead as if watching the cur-*

SOME NEW LIGHT ON THE 1896-97 "FLAP"

THE "FLAP" OF 1896 (California) and 1897 (the Midwest) is nothing new to UFO researchers. But to the best of our knowledge this is the first time the following reports—all reproduced from the Los Angeles Times—have been re-published during these current epochal times. Our thanks go to Zan Overall, of Reseda, Calif., for contributing this valuable old data.

\* \* \*  
SACRAMENTO VISITATION—AN IMMENSE WHITE LIGHT MOVING RAPIDLY TO SW.

SACRAMENTO—Nov. 22, 1896. Between six and seven o'clock to-night hundreds of people saw floating over the city what is now firmly believed to be an airship. An immense white light was displayed and it was moving rapidly in a southwesterly direction. The light was so high however that no other object could be distinguished. Tonight's visitation created considerable excitement and the airship is the sole topic of conversation. (L. A. Times, 11/23/1896.)

MYSTERIOUS PARTIES

OROVILLE. The rumor that the airship which is alleged to have passed over Sacramento was constructed near this town seems to have a grain of truth in it. The parties who could give information if they would are extremely reticent. They give evasive answers or assert they know nothing about it.

Not a single person that has seen or known of an airship being constructed near here can be found and yet there is a rumor that some man has been experimenting with different kinds of gases and testing those that are lighter than air. Experiments were made some miles east of town and no one is able to give the names of the parties who are evidently strangers seeking to avoid publicity.

\* \* \*  
THAT AIRSHIP—INVENTOR CANNOT BE FOUND AND STORY IS DISCREDITED

SAN FRANCISCO—Nov. 23. A.P. The story of the airship is not generally credited. The inventor cannot be found and those who are reputed to have seen it are not willing to give direct testimony. George D. Collins, attorney, whose name has been connected with the inventor as applicant for a patent, admits he was retained for such service, but ridicules the story of the Sacramento flying machine. He says the story is false but declares that his client is working on a machine, which is a combination of aeroplane and tailless kite.

Attorney Collins, however, says that he has not seen the flying machine and he discredits its alleged performance. The name of the inventor is still withheld and he cannot be found. (Times, 11/24.)

NO WASHINGTON INFORMATION

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Nov. 23. At the Patent Office today nothing could be learned of the application for a patent on the flying machine alleged to be taking successful flights in the neighborhood of Sacramento. The rules of the Office forbid any disclosures of names of applicants or the character of the inventions for which they seek protection.

Inquiry among patent attorneys known to control Pacific Coast business failed to disclose any knowledge of the alleged success in aeronautics. Professor Langley of the Smithsonian Institute, who has experimented scientifically for some time to demonstrate the best methods of solving the question of aerial navigation, excused himself from discussing the matter. His manner indicated plainly that he gave little credence to the Sacramento reports.

(Cont.)



1.896-97

THE 1896-97 "FLAP"

THE ALLEGED INVENTOR

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 23. The inventor of the mysterious airship which has been puzzling local scientists and others for the past week is believed to be one "Dr. E. H. Benjamin," an alleged dentist who has occupied rooms in an Ellis St. lodging house for the past two years, but so far he has successfully evaded all attempts to discover his identity. His attorney, Collins, when seen yesterday and pressed to tell further about the alleged inventor and his machine, said this morning: "The inventor came to my office in the Corden building and told me he tested the merits of the ship in last night's storm [which netted San Francisco two inches of rain] with the greatest success. The wind currents were very contrary and the test was one that tried the merits of the machine in the hardest possible manner, but it came out of the ordeal in good order having breasted the storm as well as any bird.

"He started from the locality where the vessel is housed and flew over Alcatraz and out the Golden Gate, skirting the Cliff House and returning by the same route across the bay. He hovered over the Seal Rocks for fully ten minutes, and played his searchlight on the seals. His intention is to make another try this evening probably over the same ground running on his return trip as far as Sacramento."

A dispatch was received from Sacramento last night to the effect that hundreds of people there had seen the mysterious meteor in the heavens but as yet no one had been able to see the object sufficiently well to state definitely what it was.

SAW THE AIRSHIP—IMPRESSIONABLE RED BLUFF CITIZENS MAKE DISCOVERY

RED BLUFF—Nov. 25. Many residents assert that they saw the alleged airship in the neighborhood last evening. It was first noticed about seven o'clock and was thought to be a peculiarly bright star but which was moving rapidly in a southwesterly direction toward the mountains. The summit of the mountains could be seen above the mysterious light as it moved west.

Soon after its disappearance a telegram from Chico stated that the supposed airship had passed that town soon after seven o'clock. After it had vanished it again passed over Red Bluff and then a telegram from Vacaville said the supposed airship had come from the direction of Red Bluff and after making a few turns had returned in the direction from which it came.

Several citizens say that while at first only a light was visible, later the body of an egg-shaped object was visible moving quickly through the air. The theory that it was a star was rejected because of its distinctly rocking motion which was like the motion made by a kite. (Times, 11/25.)

A FLIGHT OF IMAGINATION—ANOTHER MAN WHO HAS SEEN THE AIRSHIP

SAN JOSE—Dec. 1. The champion airship story of the season is told by John A. Horen, an electrician in the employ of the Electrical Improvement Company of this place. Horen says he has a patent on an electrical platinum speaking appliance and that by appointment he went to San Francisco Thursday to see the inventor of the airship who wished to the the appliance. Said Horen: "We went on horseback to a point on Sandy Beach, where the airship was, got aboard and rose very high. The height was registered by a meter on the ship. The inventor does not count the distance (Cont.)

FROM NEW YORK TIMES ("Topics of the Times"), Wed., March 31, 1897. (Courtesy of Roger Williamson, Guilford, Conn.)

"—THAT MYSTERIOUS AIRSHIP to which reference has been made in this column a possibly wearisome number of times obstinately refuses to 'down.' It continues to disport itself in the western skies, or, to be quite safe, perhaps one had better say in the dispatches of western correspondents with a persistency which proves one of two things—either that a practicable airship really is in active operation out there, or that the correspondents mentioned are deplorably lacking in inventive skill.

"Knowing by long and trying experience that the latter theory is in direct conflict with the facts, the inclination is almost irresistible to accept the former explanation. Scores and scores of apparently reputable people have now been quoted as vouching for the reality of this aerial vessel, and their descriptions hang together in a truly impressive way.

"It is a curious and somewhat suspicious fact, however, that nobody has yet seen the marvel by daylight. Its flights, so far as the evidence shows, are always made in the hours of darkness. Why an inventor whom the whole world is eager to applaud and to reward should conceal himself with such pertinacity after testing his machine again and again, is inexplicable. The last experience of the sky traveler was at, or over, Topeka, on Saturday last. There the usual bright headlight on a dimly seen cigar-shaped structure was watched for a long time by crowds of people, according to local accounts—and among those most impressed by it was Gov. John W. Leedy, who, like the good Populist he is, expressed the hope that the tyranny of Railroads could now at last be thrown off."

New York Times, April 15, 1897:

"That airship to which all the Western papers and some of the Eastern ones are now giving the benefit of several doubts, is visible nightly to correspondents in all parts of Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana and Iowa. The aerial voyager is evidently a Mahatma of high development, for he exhibits in a dozen places at once and has a different appearance and does different things in each of them. It is lamentable to observe, however, that everywhere he violates the United States navigation laws in relation to lights. Usually the captain of this new craft shows only one light. It is most often white, and occasionally red. If this were the worst of his offenses, it might be endured, but the ignorance he displays in the matter of side lights is simply criminal and will get him into serious trouble the moment a United States officer succeeds in bringing him to.

"While sailing over the town of Kenosha, Wisconsin, Sunday night, the sky traveler shocked and angered all the nautical men living there by showing a green light on both bows. At Waukegan, Illinois, at the same hour, both the sidelights were red, which is equally illegal and outrageous. If the airship's owner persists in this lawlessness, he will not only get the reputation of being a pirate, but his vessel will run into itself, sooner or later, and suffer injuries so serious that his next exhibition will have to be made in several pieces instead of several places."

THE 1896-97 "FLAP"

travelled by miles but by degrees. After leaving Sandy Beach Thursday afternoon we travelled westward. Before day next morning we saw lights. The inventor said they were the lamps of Honolulu. We turned east and Saturday evening about dark landed near where we started. The airship arose by means of two propellers. The movement was noiseless and swift. The inventor is 45 years old, but I cannot now tell any news, but the motive power is not steam or electricity. It is a wonderful machine and can be stopped and made to stand still in the air anywhere and comes down light as a feather."

Horen lives at the New Exchange Hotel and went to San Francisco Thursday. Some seem to give credence to his story. All admire his abilities as an accomplished story-teller and say he has a marvelous imagination. He sticks to his story and bears the name of a hard-working man. (Times, 12/2.)

THAT BRIGHT LIGHT—OVER OMAHA AGAIN AND LEAVES PEOPLE MYSTIFIED

OMAHA, Neb.—March 29 (1897). A mysterious airship was seen again last night by a number of Omaha's reputable citizens. It hove into sight about the time church was over and in half an hour had traversed the heavens and had once more disappeared. It was seen by people in all parts of the city. This time the airship came into view in the southeastern portion of the horizon. It was in the shape of a big, bright light, too big for a balloon and glowing steadily. It sailed over the city to the northwest and there disappeared behind houses and bluffs. It moved very slowly and seemed to be quite near the earth. Nothing but the light was visible. (Los Angeles Times, 3/30/1897.)

NEW SOUTH AMERICAN GROUP. One of the latest UFO organizations to instigate operations is the "Comision Observadora de Objetos Voladores No Identificados" (Observing Commission of Unidentified Flying Objects) of Argentina. The group says it is at the public's disposal concerning this matter by authorization of the provincial and national authorities of the Republic of Argentina." Señor Ariel Giro Rietta, a civilian pilot, heads the organization and Señor Cristian Vogt, author of El Misterio de los Platos Voladores, is secretary. All correspondence—they say—should be addressed: C.O.D.O.V.N.I., Casila de Correo 2560, Buenos Aires.

FLYING SAUCER BOOKS

<u>Flying Saucers from Outer Space</u> by Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe.....	\$3.00
<u>The Flying Saucer Conspiracy</u> .....	3.50
<u>The Truth About Flying Saucers</u> by Aimé Michel.....	3.95
<u>Behind the Flying Saucers</u> by Frank Scully.....	2.95
<u>The Books of Charles Fort</u> .....	6.00
<u>Flying Saucers and Common Sense</u> by Waveney Girvan.....	3.50
<u>Flying Saucers—Fact or Fiction?</u> by Max B. Miller (Library Ed.)	1.00
<u>The Report on U.F.O.'s</u> by Edward J. Ruppelt.....	4.50
<u>Space, Gravity and the Flying Saucer</u> by Leonard G. Cramp.....	3.00
<u>Aboard a Flying Saucer</u> by Truman Bethurum.....	3.00
<u>The Secret of the Saucers</u> by Orfeo Angelucci.....	3.00
<u>Flying Saucers Come from Another World</u> by Jimmy Guieu (Eng.)..	3.50

'SAUCERS'

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE: Dec. 1953, June 1954, June, September, December 1955, March, June, Sept. and Winter 1956. 25¢ each.

SAUCERS, #16

## EDITORIAL

Puisque c'en est le temps, nous commencerons par offrir nos vœux les plus sincères à nos membres, à nos abonnés et à nos collaborateurs, en disant aussi notre gratitude très vive à tous ceux qui nous ont apporté leur persévérant concours, qui nous ont encouragé de leurs lettres émouvantes, sans que nous ayons pu toujours leur donner un témoignage écrit du réconfort que leur dévouement nous avait apporté. C'est grâce à eux que nous avons été capable de poursuivre, pendant l'année qui s'achève, notre tâche, qui est si lourde et si délicate à la fois.

Nos vœux vont aussi, et de tout cœur, vers notre cher Président, dont nous sommes heureux de dire que son état s'est un peu amélioré ces derniers jours. Pas assez, hélas ! pour qu'il puisse reprendre une vie active. Nous n'avons garde d'oublier que nous lui restons toujours profondément redevable d'avoir contribué, par l'engagement de sa personne, à donner à notre groupement une réputation de sérieux qui, depuis longtemps, a largement dépassé les limites de ce pays.

Nous avons dû remettre à un prochain bulletin la réponse point par point que nous nous proposons de faire aux arguments avancés par M. Evry Schatzman, l'éminent astrophysicien, le 14 septembre, lors de la seconde émission consacrée par Michel Lancelot, sur les ondes d'Europe N° 1, au problème des soucoupes volantes. D'être retardée notre réponse n'en sera que plus précise.

Des éléments en ont déjà été donnés, par avance, dans la première émission ainsi que dans des numéros antérieurs du bulletin, et nous ne saurions trop souligner ici l'appui décisif apporté en cette matière, à nous-mêmes et à tous ceux qui, dans le monde, défendent nos propres thèses, par le Dr McDonald, en raison de sa qualité de savant — qui ne peut être écartée par ses adversaires —, de son courage éminent et de son inlassable activité.

C'est précisément parce que nous sommes conscient de la force de ses écrits, de leur exceptionnelle puissance d'impact sur la communauté scientifique, que nous nous efforcerons de mener à bien dans le plus bref délai possible, mais en y mettant tout notre soin, la traduction de ceux de ses textes que, sur son invitation expresse, nous nous proposons de publier. Nous avons été retardé dans notre effort par toutes les tâches que nous impose le G.E.P.A., mais nous espérons pouvoir dans quelques semaines remettre à l'imprimeur le manuscrit du futur ouvrage.

La place que nous avons dû réserver à un groupe d'observations canadiennes restées trop longtemps en souffrance, et à des enquêtes en France, nous a contraint, et nous nous en excusons, à reporter à un bulletin ultérieur les observations canadiennes qui nous venaient de M. Talbot et celles, faites à l'île de la Réunion, que nous avait obligeamment communiquées M. Albany. En ce qui concerne ces dernières, nous sommes d'ailleurs à la recherche de certaines précisions techniques.

Assez curieusement, deux ouvrages ont paru, à peu d'intervalle, aux U.S.A. et en Italie (1), qui prétendent expliquer tout ou partie du phénomène « soucoupes volantes » — l'ouvrage américain est plus nuancé que l'italien — par des découvertes et des réalisations faites dans les domaines de l'aérodynamique et de la propulsion par les savants hitlériens. La thèse est loin d'être nouvelle et les arguments de ses nouveaux exposants ne nous ont pas plus convaincu que ceux des anciens. Nous dirons ultérieurement pourquoi mais, la « bataille des soucoupes volantes » avant bien des aspects et se livrant à bien des niveaux, nous pourrions presque nous demander si l'édition de ces ouvrages qui contribue à brouiller les cartes, ne répond pas à quelque vœu secret d'autorités gouvernementales.

On notera aussi que Dr G.G. Doel a écrit, dans le numéro de l'automne 1968 du « BUFORA Bulletin » (2), un article tendant à attribuer à un constructeur bien terrestre, l'Américain Edward Joel Penninaton, la paternité des « dirigeables » signalés au-dessus du territoire des U.S.A. en 1896 et 1897. L'article du Dr Doel est aussi ingénieux qu'érudit, mais ne nous paraît pas non plus convaincant. Nous en reparlerons.

Autre point à noter, il semble bien, d'après la même revue, que la vague américaine des soucoupes volantes soit parvenue à un creux.

Encore merci à tous et tous nos bons vœux !

René FOUERÉ.

(1) « The German Saucer Story » par Michael X. Barton, Futura Press, 5949 Gregory Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif. 90038. et « Intercettateli senza sparare ! » par Renato Vesco, Mursia et C., via Tadino 29, 20124 Milano, Italie. Le bulletin n° 15 du « Belgian Interplanetary Study Circle », Maastortbaan 187, LIER, Belgique, reprend aussi la thèse développée dans les ouvrages précités.

(2) « BUFORA Journal », Vol. 2, N° 6, Editor : 3 Devenish Road, Weeke, WINCHESTER, Hants., Angleterre.

PS. Dic-68



## DID PENNINGTON BUILD THE 1897 U.S.A. AIRSHIP?

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170 Faversham Road, Kennington, Ashford, Kent

Speculation as to the origin of the 'Airship' reported over the central States of the U.S.A. in 1897 has resulted in many theories and at least one of these attributes the sightings to the activities of a peculiar antique sort of U.F.O. I understand that the reason that the craft looked very much like the current airship design already flying in Europe is that the U.F.O. denizens wished to present their ship to the natives in a manner that would be acceptable and understandable. However the airship in question did not seem to be at all anxious to present itself, operating as it did almost exclusively by night and skulking during daylight hours in and out of the way places.

Before accepting such 'way out' theories it would seem necessary to exclude any possibility of the machine being the production of some far-sighted inventor with the ability, wealth and resources to build and fly such a machine and also to keep the whole project secret.

Witnesses of the airship were often men of excellent reputation for veracity and often crowds of onlookers were able to compare experiences.

The descriptions tallied to a remarkable degree. It seems clear also that some of the sightings of night flying objects were of quite a different category and to present day ufologists may be recognized as being the result of 'normal' U.F.O. activity.

From the reports still in existence it is possible to build up a very good

idea of the type of dirigible involved and there is no doubt that in many respects it was similar to airships already built and flying in Europe particularly in France. In 1884 Renard and Krebs devised and built an electrically propelled airship called 'La France' which made a circular flight of five miles at its first appearance.

It would indeed have been strange if there had been no parallel activities in the U.S.A. at that time. Resources of material and money were there in abundance and among the fertile brains of a rapidly growing scientifically orientated community was there no person of sufficient genius engineering ability and wealth to take up the aerial challenge?

I believe there was and I believe that his name was Edward J. Pennington.

Pennington was born in Franklin, Indiana in 1858 and as a boy showed remarkable engineering aptitude and as he developed into manhood he displayed remarkable initiative, charm and persuasiveness. With these attributes it was not long before he was running his own factory and at the age of twenty-three had patented a reciprocating head for planing machines the first of a continuous stream of patents which flowed from his active brain until his death in 1911.

He was ruthless too and could exhibit considerable showmanship in order to further his own ideas. A characteristic of Pennington which in this context is significant was the

secrecy he achieved to protect his projects and his habit of quietly dropping one idea in favor of another with little regard to the financial outcome.

By 1885 Pennington had acquired sufficient capital to set up the Standard Machine Works in Defiance, Ohio and two years later he created two further firms to make pulleys and wood-working machinery. A flood of Pennington Patents were registered at this time at Fort Wayne.

There were rumors of a company capitalized at one million dollars in Oswego, Kansas and another at Cincinnati with factories to produce 'Freight Elevators'. (Could this phrase possibly have been a euphemism for load-carrying Airships?)

After a brief appearance at Edinburg, Illinois, where he collected some 50,000 dollars from the inhabitants for yet another 'pulley works' he came to rest at Mount Carmel, Illinois in 1890.

Now things begin to develop...this new Company was actually a four cylinder radial engine... "for the propulsion of an aerial vessel". He also let it be known, that he was "readying a vessel to fly from Mount Carmel to New York".

In 1891 he exhibited a captive airship some thirty feet long and six feet in diameter. It flew in a circle propelled by an airscrew turned electrically. The current was conveyed by wires in the tethering cable.

In 1893 he turned his attention to motor driven vehicles and again a

spate of patents flooded from the Pennington brain. Soon he was making motor-cycles in Cleveland, Ohio and here he invented the first balloon tyre.

Such giddy progress was bound to meet with reverses and due to his dogmatic attitude and ruthless decisions he began to make enemies: yet his uncanny instinct for avoiding trouble kept him from falling foul of the law.

During 1894 he joined Thomas Kane who made kerosene engines widely used in dairies for milk separation. This event is most important in this thesis which will be evident later. Here, in Racine on the shores of lake Michigan they financed a really large concern for the development of petrol engines.

They patented among other things an 'electric igniter' for petrol driven engines which was really the first sparking plug, in 1895. In this year Pennington visited England and took some of his vehicles with him.

Exercising his well-known assurance and charm he persuaded Henry J. Lawson a successful manufacturer of bicycles to purchase patents to the tune of a half a million dollars. He was still here in 1896 and entered the Brighton Run. After an altercation with Mons. Leon Bollée his claim to have won the event was not disputed. After this he participated in the aerial demonstrations in the U.S.A. late in 1896 and during 1897.

In December 1895 he had deposed with the American Patents Office the design for full sized Airship. Many of the features of this design are so close to those described by witnesses of the aerial ship seen in 1896 and 1897 that on this evidence alone one would suspect that Pennington could have been responsible.

Basing the scale of the design on the size of the passenger seats the overall length of the ship would be about 140 ft. The keel beneath which provided accommodation for the crew and passengers, also housed large batteries and extended for 70 ft. with an equal amount of overhang of the envelope at each end. At the front end of the envelope a large airscrew about 50 ft. from tip to tip provided traction. At the rear an ample rudder and a horizontal fin allowed control

of direction.

At the sides two horizontally disposed propellers furnished lateral 'trimming'. Along the top of the ship a high dorsal fin would help to prevent sideways drift and yawing at slow speeds. Altogether a very impressive aeronautical design for that period of time.

It is probable that the finished airship based on this plan would deviate in minor details. Perhaps laterally placed aircrews were found to give a better lift and control if suitably shaped.

Wings or large ailerons above the envelope would also help to provide lift if suitably angled. In 1895 during his motorcycle phase Pennington was heard to remark: "Suppose I have a cycle, screw driven, making a mile a minute. . . just suppose that. . . then suppose that I put aeroplanes on that machine. . . and they are under good control, what then?"

What then indeed, the Wright Brothers would have been forestalled by several years.

The sighting of the Airship on the ground in 1897 by Captain Hooton at 6 p.m. on about 20th April is usually regarded as a true account of his experience which he recounted in the Little Rock, Arkansas, Gazette. He was, he said, out hunting near Homan when he heard the sound of 'pumping' like the noise of a Westinghouse locomotive brake.

Going in the direction of the sound he was amazed to behold "the famous airship" in an open space. A man wearing dark glasses was doing something at the rear of the ship. As he approached four other men appeared.

During the ensuing conversation there was no doubt in his mind that the crew were American. When the ship was ready, three large 'wheels' started to rotate on either side of the airship and with a hissing sound she took off. The 'aeroplanes' on top of the envelope sprang forward and the ship rapidly gained height and speed.

(For a more detailed account of this sighting please refer to the JULY/AUGUST 1966 issue of *The Flying Saucer Review*.)

The 'pumping noise' is of great significance. This noise is noted in at least three of the sightings. Twice it

was referred to as being similar to that made by a milk separator. This is almost conclusive, it was Thomas Kane whom Pennington joined in 1894, who made the motors for these separators.

All witnesses agree that there were lights aboard in abundance with our very bright searchlight which was seen to dim as the airship accelerated.

One witness encountering the aeronaut grounded claims to have asked why he turned the light on and off so much. He replied, no doubt truthfully that it consumed a great deal of motive power. We are led to the conclusion that Pennington's ship was propelled by a petrol-electric, or diesel-electric system. A bank of large batteries would be charged by a motor driven dynamo and would then operate electric motors geared to the airscrew(s). This system was widely used for the propulsion of road vehicles in the early years of this century.

After a trip of some miles it might be necessary to land to recharge batteries. Such a propulsion system would be well within Pennington's capabilities at this time.

The crew referred to by some witnesses included a woman, and it was customary for Pennington to take his wife on most of his exploits. (He married three times but I cannot find record of any children.) Also a bearded man.

I have a photograph of Pennington with one of his vehicles and here he is accompanied by a man with a beard. Pennington himself was tall and of good physique. He usually sported a rather long dark moustache.

The next evidence required toward proving that the ship was not only terrestrial but Pennington's, is to plot the course of the airship from recorded sightings during the 'voyages' of 1897 and to show that its speed was within the capabilities of such an early craft and that it operated in the vicinity of Pennington workshops.

Here I suggest the reader obtain a good large scale map of the central States of America. Those included in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1911 are most useful being nearly contemporary.

Two series of sightings occurred in 1897.

*Expedition One.* Starting from Pennington's base at Oswego, Kansas, to Belleville, Kansas, to arrive March 25th, thence to Sioux City some 200 miles northward travelling at night. Making around 40 mph and in fair weather the six or so hours of darkness would allow easy arrival by 28th March. Here the ship landed and charged batteries?

Turning southward an easy night run of 100 miles allowed late worshippers leaving church at Omaha, Nebraska to view the aerial visitor. Continuing via Lincoln and Beatrice on the southerly run arrival at Everest, Kansas on April 1st., another 100 miles apart. In fact Kansas City was reached quite early at 8:15.

Back to base at Oswego without serious mishap on about the 3rd. April?

After this there are three possibilities. a) Pennington flew to Racine on lake Michigan by April 9th keeping to out-of-the-way landing sites. b) The ship was partly dismantled and carried by rail in Pennington's closed rail cars to Racine. c) That Thomas Kane had another similar airship at Racine. I would suggest (b) as being the most probable in the circumstances. Pennington had the resources and the experience in moving large objects by rail from place to place, vide his captive airship which was shown at exhibitions at Chicago and elsewhere.

*Expedition Two.* The Airship would have taken the air on the evening of April 9th 1897 and leaving Racine some 60 miles from Chicago was seen first north of the city and then to south-east at 9:30 p.m. passing over the lake.

Turning westward the ship would have reached vicinity of Eldon in Iowa some 200 miles after five hours at around forty mph. Spending the day of the 10th on the ground at some secluded spot the batteries would again be charged and ready for the take-off on the evening of April 10th. Then passing over Eldon westward to Ottumwa (10 miles) at 7:25 and 7:40 p.m. respectively, the ship is seen near Albia 25 miles further on at about 8:10 p.m. This chain of sightings allows some estimation of the airship's speed—35 miles in 45 minutes which is better than 45 mph. Wind speed

must be taken into account, but from the sighting reports the weather during this period seems to have been remarkably calm.

Steering now toward the north-west apparently en route for Racine, the ship would have passed near Mount Carroll but the date given for the airship over this city is April 9th. One must conclude that if this date is correct that the craft passed over this city on the westward leg of its journey before turning south-east toward Eldon. This is perfectly possible on the time schedule estimated.

However, and here one must speculate on Pennington's movements, it is not certain how the airship arrived at its next point at Yates Center, Kansas on April 19th. It could well have travelled at night over the next week or so southward which would be well within its 40 mph capabilities. Or, it may have returned to Racine and have been once more despatched by rail.

At Yates Center there was the unfortunate incident of a young heifer becoming entangled in the mooring rope on takeoff. Then southeast and a fairly long haul—400 miles—to near Texarkana, but at 40 mph only ten hours of darkness were necessary. Here the ship was obliged to land on April 21st. to recharge batteries. In the evening when all was ready for take-off the airship was spotted by one Captain J. Hooton whose detailed report is well known.

Airborne again and travelling in a leisurely manner Hot Springs, Arkansas was reached on May 6th. Once more the ship landed and was encountered by the Law Officers, Constable Sumpter and Deputy Sheriff McLemore. Both these gentlemen have sworn affidavits to their evidence in which they tell of a bearded mechanic and a young woman. There was also a young man who was engaged in filling a water bag. They were informed that the ship was en route for Nashville, Tennessee. This may well have been so, but I feel that it was not long before it was once again safely at Oswego, Kansas with Pennington highly satisfied with his aerial exploits. There is little evidence of its re-appearance.

From the foregoing evidence it must be conceded that the itinerary

followed by the 1897 airship was not particularly miraculous even for a craft of that period, only it took place in America where hitherto no such aerial exploits had been seen. No wonder then, that the onlookers became scared and confused, suspecting a work of the Devil. The only Devil responsible was in my opinion one eccentric, brilliant inventor named Edward Joel Pennington.

Of course there are so many questions left unanswered. For instance why did Pennington decide to drop the whole project just when fame and fortune might seem to have been within his grasp? I would suggest that he was clever enough to realize that his airship, though a very remarkable invention, had very severe limitations which could not readily be overcome.

There would be little prospect of increasing the battery capacity without making the ship larger and unwieldy. It was obviously very much a fine weather craft and he had been extraordinarily lucky to have had such a long spell of fine, calm weather for his trials.

Also, he would have realized that until the internal combustion engine could be improved considerably in size and reliability the whole airship project had better be shelved. The new and more financially rewarding field of the motor car must have seemed to Pennington to offer much better prospects of immediate financial rewards. He must also have known that there were aeronautical designers in Europe who had forged ahead in the airship field with whom he could hardly compete.

In the Motor Museum in Beaulieu, Hampshire there is a very rare vehicle. It is an 1896 Pennington motor-tricycle. It is worth looking at closely. The twin-cylinder, water cooled engine functions by fuel injection and the ignition system is remarkably ingenious, operating an early form of spark plug on each cylinder. The wheels have wire spokes and furnished with wide tires of modern cross section. It is a really remarkable piece of advanced engineering for its time and marks its designer, Pennington, as a brilliant engineer of foresight and genius.

Miami Beach, Florida 33162.

● **UFO RESEARCHERS:** I have recently become engaged in researching a most interesting and, to me, a very important aspect of Ufology. I am referring to the great "airship" flap of 1896-97. Doubt that many Ufologists realize the scope of this flap. It apparently began on the West Coast in November, 1896, and slowly spread eastward until it reached the Midwest and Eastern portions of the country in the Spring of 1897. If any reader cares to check local newspaper files for such data, I would greatly appreciate hearing of any new information, and would be glad to exchange data with other researchers. To those who reside West of the Rocky Mountains, I would suggest that you concentrate your efforts on the months of November/December, 1896, with spot checks into 1897. To those living East of the Rockies, I would recommend a thorough search of newspaper files for April/May, 1897, with spot checks at earlier periods. The "airships" were apparently seen in every state during the above-mentioned periods. Sightings were commonplace, while landings and contacts were numerous. Join with me in this amazing search: **Lucius Farish**, Route One, Plummerville, Arkansas 72127.

● **WANTED:** Second hand copies of "The Hidden World" series. Preferably in good reading condition; willing to pay up to 1/2 to 3/4 original price for a complete set in good condition. Also interested in any and all magazines and books concerning subterranean phenomena and specifically the Shaver Mystery. Any such reading matter obtained will be utilized in a special group study and analysis of this enigma. Any conclusions reached, findings, results, etc., will subsequently be published for the benefit of all those interested in said mystery. This material will be analyzed in an objective, scientific manner and one phase of the research will include a computer evaluation. Contact: **Erich Aggen, Jr.**, Director, Project "Solve", 457 Morse Ave., Liberty, Mo. 64068.

"FLYING SAUCERS"  
DEC - 1966

potremmo scoprire un nuovo "universo" se non si scoprissero in tutta la sua opera quegli archetipi che lo riallacciano alla più genuina tradizione. I nostri lettori sono invitati a intervenire.

## RISPONDE PIER LUIGI SANI

### Casi ufologici

Il Sig. R. Boni di Padova, a cui ho già avuto occasione di rispondere (G.d.M. n. 37, pag. 73), mi indirizza altre due lettere « zeppe » di quesiti di carattere ufologico o affine. Riassumo i principali:

1) *Caso Larch* — La misteriosa scomparsa (rapimento?) dell'undicenne *Oliver Larch*, avvenuta secondo R. Pinotti in U.S.A. nel 1889, sembra « gemella » di quella dell'undicenne *Oliver Thomas*, avvenuta secondo J. Bergier (in « Gli Extraterrestri ») in Inghilterra nel 1909. Si tratta dello stesso fatto?

2) *Caso Barclay del 1897* — Richiesto della sua provenienza dal testimone *Barclay*, l'occupante della misteriosa « Airship » avrebbe risposto: « Da ogni dove » secondo il G.d.M. n. 39 (pag. 18), o « Da nessun posto » secondo « Gli Arcani » n. 16 (pag. 31). Qual è la versione giusta? Perché non è stata ancora trattata a fondo, in Italia, l'ondata dell'Airship in U.S.A. del 1896-97?

3) *Caso « Aurora » (Texas)* — È stato riesumato il cadavere del presunto « marziano » che sarebbe precipitato in quella località nell'aprile del 1897?

4) È attendibile la notizia circa il « miraggio permanente » di una città sconosciuta nel deserto dell'Arizona, di cui parla G. Tarade nel libro « Gli archivi del cosmo »?

5) Esistono teorie, oltre quella sostenuta da A. Perego in « L'aviazione di altri pianeti opera tra noi », circa le cosiddette « esplosioni fantasma »?

6) L'episodio dei « bambini verdi » che sarebbero apparsi misteriosamente in Spagna nel 1887, e che certi autori identificano in esseri ultradimensionali o extraterrestri, presenta alcune divergenze fra la versione riferita da P. Kolosimo in « Non è terrestre » e quella di J. Bergier ne « Gli extraterrestri ». Qual è la versione esatta?

7) Raguagli sul « caso Fentz » di cui riferisce il G.d.M. n. 36 a pag. 24, e la nazionalità della rivista « Fakta » da cui esso è stato rilevato.

8) Precisazioni sui racconti medievali di « ancore calate dal cielo », di travi di fuoco, di navi volanti.

9) Differenza fra la « Magonia » del Vallée e l'universo « parallelo » di cui accenna il G.d.M. n. 19 a pag. 54.

10) Come si inquadra il caso dei coniugi Hill nella teoria Vallée (Magonia), dal momento che i presunti occupanti dichiarano di essere extraterrestri?

11) Parere sulle fotografie di Ufo scattate da Bruno Ghibaudi nel 1962 sul lungomare di Pescara.

● La quantità e la natura dei quesiti che lei mi pone con le sue lettere dimostrano due cose: a) che lei esercita, su quanto legge nei libri e nelle riviste di ufologia e argomenti affini, un più che lodevole senso critico; b) che la letteratura ufologica in genere, allorché viene affrontata con simile senso critico, denuncia fatalmente le sue carenze documentarie e il suo basso grado di attendibilità.

Per quanto riguarda il primo punto, non

posso che complimentarmi con lei, ben sapendo che gli appassionati di fatti « strani » non chiedono, generalmente, che di abbeverarsi a sazietà alla magica fonte dell'insolito, senza preoccuparsi minimamente di accertare se l'acqua di quella fonte sia, per così dire, « potabile ». Le dirò che questo atteggiamento acritico è molto diffuso fra gli stessi « studiosi » della materia.

Per quanto concerne il secondo punto, il discorso è più complesso. La letteratura ufologica è diventata ormai immensa. Già cinque anni or sono, nel 1969, una bibliografia compilata per conto della « Biblioteca del Congresso » degli Stati Uniti includeva ben 1600 titoli.

Oggi supererebbe certamente le 2000 unità. Questa enorme produzione rispecchia, con i suoi molteplici filoni, tutti i diversi aspetti del « mito » degli Ufo: contattismo, cultismo, clipeologia, archeologia spaziale, etc... Nel suo insieme, forma un « assordante rumore di fondo », nel quale è estremamente difficile, per chi non abbia una lunga esperienza e soprattutto non sia dotato di spirito critico, riuscire a selezionare il « segnale ». Credo di non essere molto lontano dal vero affermando che i buoni testi ufologici, intendendo per tali quelli che hanno autentico valore documentario e che offrono sufficiente garanzia di attendibilità, (il « segnale », appunto), non raggiungono il numero di 50 (ma forse sono ottimista). Il resto non è che letteratura di « evasione », che si differenzia dalla fantascienza (di bassa lega) solo per la sua pretesa di riferire « cose vere ». Alla base di questo fenomeno c'è, naturalmente, la speculazione commerciale. I libri sugli Ufo si vendono. Ed è relativamente facile scriverli: basta possedere una conoscenza anche superficiale dell'argomento, attingere un certo numero di « fatti » e di « notizie » da altri libri già pubblicati, e ripresentare il tutto con un sapiente condimento di sensazionalismo. L'effetto è garantito. C'è sempre un pubblico disposto a leggere e a « credere » sulla parola... dell'autore.

Questo pubblico, che rappresenta la stragrande maggioranza degli appassionati del mistero, non chiede, in effetti, che di « evadere ». L'autenticità delle notizie che apprende è problema del tutto secondario, se pure è un problema. Purtroppo, la maggior parte dei « fatti » riferiti in queste opere non è che l'eco, rimbalsata da libro a libro, da rivista a rivista, di notizie che quasi sempre erano, già all'origine, distorte se non addirittura false. Ma chi si preoccupa più di controllarle?

Il risultato di questa « staffetta » letteraria è una colossale mistificazione, più o meno consapevole.

Ovviamente, il lettore attento che cerca di documentarsi e non semplicemente di « evadere », viene assalito da una folla di dubbi. Contraddizioni, incongruenze, versioni diverse e contrastanti dello stesso « episodio », scambio di date e di nomi, lo imbarazzano e lo irritano.

La confusione è tanto più grande quanto più « vecchio » è il fatto riferito. *Oliver Larch* (o *Lerch*, o *Thomas*), i « bambini verdi », le ancore calate dal cielo, le travi di fuoco, sono soltanto alcuni esem-





*coup de questions restent sans réponse. Peut-être est-ce mieux ainsi. Trop chercher à comprendre pourrait être mal perçu dans les milieux très fermés, sinon éminemment secrets, et pour qui la vie n'est qu'aléatoire et fonction de la raison d'Etat.»*

Plus intéressante par contre est l'appartenance de l'auteur à la Commission d'Etude Ouranos (CEO), association française présentée ici comme «un organisme non sectaire (...) voué à l'étude des phénomènes religieux». Ouranos est en fait moins connue des théologiens que des ufologues, puisqu'elle fut fondée en 1951 par l'un d'entre-eux, Marc Thirouin. La CEO connut une certaine renommée ufologique sous l'impulsion de son «responsable des enquêtes», l'écrivain de science-fiction Jimmy Guieu. Celui-ci s'était rendu célèbre par la publication de deux ouvrages sur les soucoupes volantes réédités en 1972 à l'Omni-Littéraire. Une maison d'édition dont Julien Origas, ancien agent de la Gestapo et compagnon de route des chefs de l'OTS, fut le responsable...

Ces dernières années, la CEO a

adopté des positions radicales sur le «*phénomène extraterrestre*» et le paranormal en général, voyant derrière ceux-ci une «*action de subversion, afin de créer un état parapsychocratique collectif suffisant pour laisser libre cours à des forces occultes noires et totalitaires du surréel paraphysique (...)*» (in *Le monde occulte du surréel paraphysique*, Ouranos, 1982). Voir la CEO dissenter sur l'OTS ne peut donc manquer de rappeler la parabole de l'hôpital et de la charité.

RM

Vie et mort de l'Ordre du Temple Solaire, Raphaël Aubert et Carl-A. Keller, Jouvence 1994, 125 pages, 74 ff.

La vérité sur l'Ordre du Temple Solaire, René de Vailly, Québecor 1995, 212 pages (non disponible en France).

## Lectures

Quatre cent quatre vingt-dix pages pour le premier des deux romans publiés (il y en aura 4 en tout) de W.A. Harbinson tournant autour des ovnis. Une paille ! Mélangeant habilement la Science, la Politique, l'Histoire et la fiction, l'auteur nous entraîne dans *Inception*, sur les chemins d'une conspiration incroyable à la trame pourtant simple, déjà imaginée par certains ufologues que d'aucuns qualifieront de marginaux. *Me-Ab 95*

Nous sommes en 1930. Le grondement sourd des bottes allemandes se fait entendre dans la lointaine Amérique au moment même où Robert H. Goddard s'emploie à régler les derniers préparatifs au lancement des fusées qui ouvriront la voie à la conquête spatiale. Au nombre de ses amis proches,

John Wilson, personnage mystérieux et inquiétant s'il en est, dont le génie est indispensable à Goddard pour mener à bien ses recherches. Un génie qui se laissera rapidement tenter par le chant des sirènes, et qui gagnera l'Allemagne moins par idéologie que parce qu'il pense que le Reich est susceptible de lui apporter ce qu'il cherche vraiment : la reconnaissance et les moyens de mettre en oeuvre la construction d'armes non conventionnelles. L'intrigue nous apprendra en effet que Wilson, né en 1870, est vraisemblablement à l'origine de la vague d'aéronefs fantômes de 1896-1997, du moins, ce sont les soupçons qui pèsent sur lui puisque personne ne sait ce qu'il advint de lui entre 1895 (il a alors 25 ans) et 1930 au moment où il rencontre Goddard.

Après maintes péripéties, on retrouvera Wilson à Prague, en pleine débâcle allemande, sur le point de terminer, avec Schriever, la soucoupe qui doit constituer l'arme ultime. A ses trousses, l'armée russe qui marche sur Prague, Bradley, un vétéran de la National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (précurseur de la NASA) qui n'a de cesse de traquer le traître, et les hommes d'élite d'Himmler lui-même qui ne veut à aucun prix que la soucoupe tombe aux mains de l'ennemi. On s'en doute, la rencontre finira très mal avec la destruction totale du prototype. Wilson s'enfuira malgré tout, avec les plans et la complicité d'un sous-marin allemand, vers un pays d'Amérique du Sud où l'on n'entendra plus parler de lui. L'Histoire a écrit la fin de la guerre, la capitulation de l'Allemagne, la fuite des «cerveaux» vers les États-Unis et l'Union Soviétique. Bradley, grièvement blessé, est soigné avant de regagner Roswell, ou il mène une vie paisible troublée seulement par les souvenirs

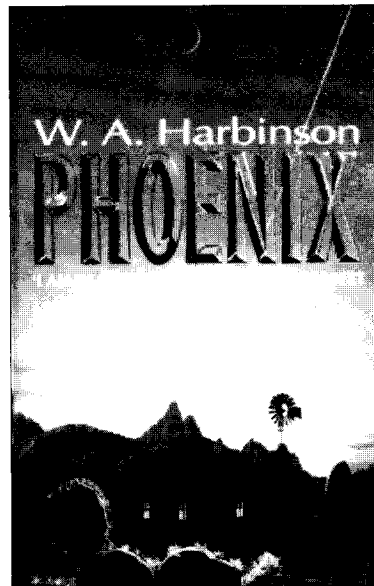
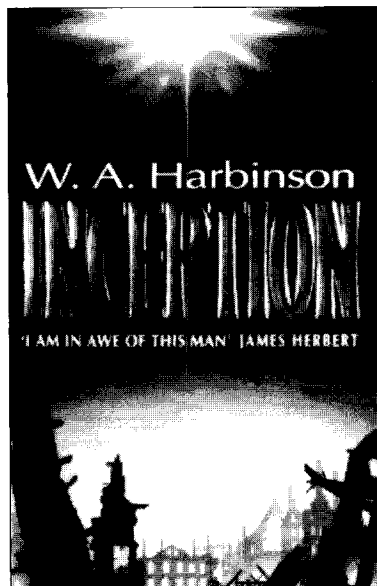
## Phénomène

frustrants d'un Wilson traître, d'un Wilson insaisissable, froid et calculateur dont il n'aura jamais eu l'occasion de croiser le regard... Nous sommes en 1947, précisément le 2 juillet. Mais l'histoire ne fait que commencer. Lorsque le téléphone sonne, Bradley reconnaît la voix du premier lieutenant de la base de Roswell, une

vieille connaissance. Les radars viennent de détecter quelque chose qui s'est écrasé. Bradley doit se rendre immédiatement sur les lieux s'il veut le voir avant que toute trace ne soit effacée. L'armée s'active en effet...

Bradley n'arrivera jamais au rendez-vous. Il fera ce que l'on appelle une rencontre du troisième type, en l'occurrence, ici, un type qui s'appelle Wilson descendu d'un de ses engins dont on aura compris qu'ils sont désormais au point. La rencontre sera froide, cynique, presque initiatique et à peine voilée de menaces à l'encontre de Bradley et de sa famille. Ebranlé, ce dernier décide de jeter l'éponge. Il brûlera tous ses dossiers et mettra un terme à sa traque. Rideau ! Fin de la première partie.

Dans le deuxième ouvrage, intitulé *Phoenix*, la conspiration s'épaissit avec le nombre de pages (568 !) qui couvrent la période de l'immédiate après-guerre jusque dans les années soixante. La soucoupe de Roswell a été récupérée par les militaires, alors que Marlon, l'un



des rares témoins civils du crash, sera enlevé par Wilson. On fera alors la connaissance de Jack Fuller, de la CIA, qui sera sur les lieux du crash avec les militaires pour s'assurer, au nom de son gouvernement, d'un black-out complet. Puis il y a aussi Dwight, de l'Air Technical Intelligence Centre, qui sera de tous les combats, avec Hynek, McDonald et les groupements privés pour essayer de lever le voile sur ce qui se passe réellement dans les sphères gouvernementales. Wilson, entre-temps, s'est réfugié dans l'Antarctique, où il a construit une immense base secrète dans laquelle sont fabriquées les soucoupes lui conférant une position de force qui amènera les autorités américaines à conclure un pacte : il leur garantit une avance technologique sérieuse sur leurs adversaires (la Chine et l'URSS), moyennant quoi ils s'engagent à fermer les yeux sur les enlèvements pratiqués (en fait une main d'oeuvre contrainte à l'esclavage pour la fabrication des engins). Ils devront aussi tourner les ovnis en ridicule et réduire les témoins au silence. C'est ça ou rien ! Et les manifestations de su-

priorité de Wilson finiront de convaincre les sceptiques qu'il n'y a pas d'autre solution. Ainsi interviendra-t-il régulièrement pour donner un coup de pouce à la technologie américaine ou, au contraire, pour en freiner les acquis.

Bradley, dont la défection à Roswell en

avait étonné plus d'un, sera visité tour à tour par de nombreuses personnes dont Dwight, qui tenteront de connaître la vérité. Terrifié, il ne concédera à parler que le jour où Fuller lui révèle qu'il est déjà au courant. Ce sera la dernière fois que lui et sa femme seront vus vivants. Il en sait beaucoup trop... il sera éliminé.

Les réunions entre Wilson et les autorités américaines (y compris jusqu'au président) se poursuivront à un rythme régulier au cours d'un récit dont on aura du mal à saisir la finalité. L'auteur, qui fournit une nouvelle « grille de lecture » de l'ufologie comprenant des éléments connus et authentiques (personnalités, projets, observations célèbres) termine ce deuxième volume en réduisant Dwight au silence. Ce dernier est en effet « averti », comme le fut en son temps Bradley lors d'une rencontre rapprochée, qu'il en sait beaucoup trop et qu'il est grand temps, pour le bien de sa femme et de sa fille, de se taire. La mise en garde était claire et l'homme, qui ne s'était pas présenté, lui dit qu'au besoin, McDonald se char-

essence (!?) et y demeura pendant quelques instants. Quand les habitants des lieux s'approchèrent, le propriétaire du vaisseau grimpa à bord et fila loin dans la profondeur de la nuit..." ("Wabash-Plain-Dealer", Wabash, Indiana, 23 avril 1897, p.3).

- 20 avril, 14h00, Smithville, Texas : "...L'airship se posa sur le sol... Nos chevaux donnèrent des signes de frayeur au point que nous préférâmes stopper pour les attacher, et nous nous dirigeâmes vers l'appareil. Mais à notre approche, il s'éleva et fila vers l'ouest. Au moment où nous l'avons vu au sol, il y avait 4 ou 5 hommes autour de lui qui réintégrèrent l'appareil à notre vue et s'envolèrent. Les témoins sont MM. E.F. Mc CLENDON, physicien, et John BAKER un des associés de la Craddock & BAKER Cie." ("San-Antonio-Daily-Express", San-Antonio, Texas, 24 avril 1897).

- 21 avril, soir, Vallée de Symmes, Ohio : "...Des témoins aperçurent l'airship près de la vieille église de la petite vallée de Symmes, et ils tentèrent de s'en approcher furtivement... Ils entendirent des gens à l'intérieur qui parlaient dans un caquetage inintelligible. Puis ils virent la chose s'élever et étendre ses ailes pour s'éloigner..." ("Ceredo-Advance", Ceredo, Virginie de l'Ouest, 22 avril 1897).

Nous n'avons pas réussi à nous procurer la version originale de l'affaire de Mc Kinney Bayou (Arkansas) du 25 avril, où un certain Juge A. BYRNE aurait vu trois hommes ressemblant à des japonais dans un airship atterri qui décolla rapidement sans attendre l'arrivée du témoin. Mais elle est bien connue des ufologues avertis.

Par contre nous avons obtenu un cas qui, dans les débuts de sa narration, nous promettait une magnifique R.R.3. Malheureusement, nous avons par la suite déchanté. Toutefois, pour ne pas avoir l'air de "censurer" cette information, nous vous livrons la partie qui nous a chagriné :

- 20 avril, soir, Clarksburg, Virginie de l'Ouest : "...Il y avait trois personnes à bord, et comme leurs visages étaient dans l'ombre, je n'ai pas pu distinguer leurs traits. Ce qui me stupéfia, fut le fait qu'ils avaient de grandes robes et de longs cheveux flottant sur leurs épaules. Leur apparence était bizarre... et cela me laissa penser que les occupants du vaisseau devaient venir d'un autre monde et ont peur d'atterrir sur terre, mais effectueraient des reconnaissances... Le témoin estime que l'airship a pu être attiré par les lumières dispensées par les nombreuses manufactures de la région..." ("Pittsburg-Leader", Pittsburg, Pennsylvanie, 24 avril 1897, p.8).

Nous éviterons le piège de la dissertation sur ce cas. Il comporte des éléments n'entrant dans

aucun schéma vraiment solide, hormis peut-être celui des "anges" de l'imagerie populaire...

Nous en terminerons avec les R.R.3 par un cas assez extraordinaire, difficile à classer définitivement comme authentique, qui peut n'être qu'un canular, mais qui comporte un ou deux éléments pouvant le faire entrer dans un schéma "contactés", et que nous incluons volontairement (et provisoirement) dans le schéma faisant l'objet de ce paragraphe :

- 13 avril, nuit, Osage, Iowa : "...Je revenais de Stacyville en voiture hippomobile lorsque mon cheval s'arrêta et s'ébroua. J'aperçus un long cigare en forme de tube muni d'ailes sur les côtés, immenses comme celles d'un dragon. Il se tenait au milieu de la route, mais à peine étions-nous arrêtés qu'il s'éleva gracieusement dans les airs et nous survola à la verticale, si près, que j'aurais pu le toucher de la main si j'avais voulu. Le vaisseau était occupé par les deux plus belles créatures que j'aie jamais vues, lesquelles communiquèrent avec moi par la pensée, me faisant savoir qu'elles étaient les agents d'un autre monde envoyées ici pour chercher un honnête homme (!?). Bien entendu j'étais déconcerté de leur choix, et je leur promis de tout faire pour leur être agréable. Ils m'ordonnèrent de dire à tous "les dadais stupides d'en dessous, qu'ils habitaient un monde de gadoue", et qu'eux avaient été chargés d'un travail de surveillance, avec l'intention d'acquiescer la Terre et d'en faire une colonie d'esprits. Comme ils ne sont pas matériels, ils dirent qu'ils n'interféreraient pas avec la vie des habitants, et cesseraient de nous déranger lorsque nous cesseraient de distinguer leurs formes, lesquelles sont une combinaison de néant et d'esprit (!). Une fois ces informations divulguées, ils appuyèrent sur un levier, et avec un joli balancement, le grand vaisseau s'éleva et s'éloigna..." ("Mitchell-Country-Press", Osage, Iowa, 15 avril 1897, p.6).

Vraiment étonnant, n'est-ce pas ? Qu'un américain de 1897 ait pu inventer un tel incident est aussi dur à avaler que ses allégations !

(à suivre)

## PRECISION

Un lecteur, M. Robert Durieux nous signale à propos de l'article de F. Lagarde "l'insolite qui dérange" (LDLN 217-218 page 18 ligne 7 que le restaurant est "La boîte à Bouffe" (et non "La Grande Bouffe"), et lignes 8 et 9 que le véhicule était une NSU R080 (et non une DS 21).

## Revelations in 1897 Kansas 'Calfnapping'

The story of this incident has found its place in countless books covering the topic of UFO's. Now explanations have been offered in such publications as *Fate* and *Fortean Times*. The following facts are presented to bring the readers of the *APRO Bulletin* up to date on the many facets of this case.

The circumstances revolve around a story appearing in the April 23, 1897 issue of the *Yates Center Farmer's Advocate*. The publication printed a story about Alexander Hamilton, a prominent local rancher. Mr. Hamilton testified that four days previously he and his son Wallace Hamilton together with Gid Heslip had "observed an airship slowly descending upon my cow lot about 40 rods from the house." The three men ran to the corral and discovered a calf caught in the fence. There was a rope tied to its neck. The rope was attached above to a cigar-shaped airship. In the carriage below the airship were six strange beings. There were two men, a woman, and three children. The beings conversed in a strange language. They focused the searchlight on the men below and left the area with the calf in tow. The next day the calf's hide, legs, and head were found several miles away. Affidavits and statements supported this information.

In 1965 Jacques Vallee discussed the episode in *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*. Countless other books presented this incident in successive years. But the *Buffalo Enterprise* of January 28, 1943 is to be credited with true facts in the case. In this newspaper there appeared a letter by Ed F. Hudson. Mr. Hudson had been the 1897 editor of the *Yates Center Farmer's Advocate*. The following is the statement of Ed F. Hudson in this newspaper:

"I had just bought and installed a little gasoline engine, the first I believe to come to Yates Center, using it to run my machinery replacing the hand-power on the old Country Campbell press and kicking the job presses. I invited many of my friends into the back shop to see the engine work. Hamilton was one of them. He exclaimed, 'Now they can fly,' hence the airship story that we made up. After we had published it, the story was copied in many of the largest newspapers in this country, England, France, and Germany, some illustrating it with pen-drawn imagining by their staff artists. There were also hundreds of inquiries from every part of the globe. Soon afterwards their [sic] came the various experiments in flight, but I have always maintained that Alex Hamilton was the real inventor of human flight." Also Ed Hudson's son Ben explained in a related note that his father and Hamilton had "concocted that story following a Saturday afternoon pow-wow which was customary for Saturdays in those days."

The above article was discovered by A.W.S. correspondent of R. J. Rickard, editor of England's *Fortean Times*. This occurred in 1976 when he worked on a historical research project. Jerome Clark received a copy of the story and conducted an extensive effort to confirm and substantiate the facts in the case. Mr. Clark's efforts are to be lauded for providing further facts relative to this hoax type case.

(See Kansas Page Eight)

## Insas — 1897

(Continued from Page Seven)

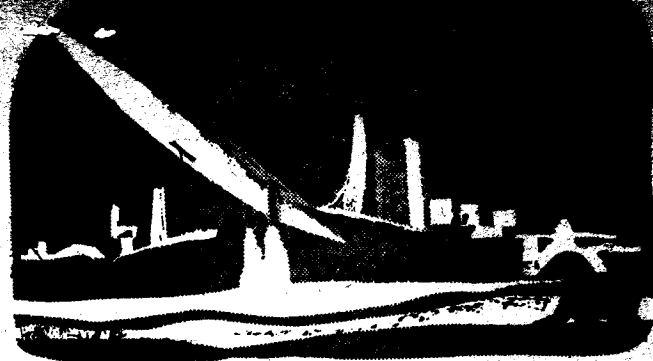
Jerome Clark obtained additional information by publishing a letter in the September 16, 1976 issue of *Yates Center News* seeking further information. Mrs. Anna Steeby of Wichita, Kansas wrote that Ethel L. Shaw, her 93 year old mother, had heard the tale from Alexander Hamilton himself. There had evidently been a Liar's Club. The airship-calf story provided the super confirmation. The final confirming information was obtained by Jerome Clark in a telephone conversation with Elizabeth Hamilton Linde, granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton. Mrs. Linde admitted that she had heard the story from contemporaries of her grandfather over the years. The story had been a hoax concocted by the editor, Alexander Hamilton, grandfather, and other members of a local Liar's Club. Mrs. Linde also related that Mrs. Shaw was a friend of Alexander Hamilton's daughter Nell and in all likelihood was telling the truth about the confession by Alexander Hamilton in the Hamilton home.

Thus this calf-napping incident has been brought to an end after so many years of doubt and discussion. The persistent efforts of writer Jerome Clark are to be commended for the resolution of this long discussed episode. It is another of the many hoaxes which must be separated from the genuine UFO incidents.



By Dennis Stamey

Probably the most fantastic story concerning the Great Airship Scare in the 1890's concerned the unsubstantiated report submitted to the Dallas Morning News on April 17, 1897, by a correspondent, S.E. Haydon, from Aurora, Texas. Since it is completely shrouded in mystery and overlooked by UFOlogists all these years, I think you will be most interested in a complete report from the Dallas newspaper account printed in the April 19th edition.



"About 6 o'clock this morning the early risers of Aurora were astonished at the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing through the country.

"It was travelling due north, and much nearer the earth than ever before. Evidently some of the machinery was out of order, for it was making only a speed of 10 or 12 mph and gradually settling toward the earth. It sailed directly over the public square, and when it reached the north part of town, collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank destroying the judge's flower garden.

"The pilot of the ship is supposed to have been the only one on board, and while his remains are badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not an inhabitant of this world.

"Mr. T.J. Weems, the United States signal service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he was a native of the planet Mars.

"Papers found on this person - evidently the record of his travels - are written in some unknown hieroglyphics and cannot be deciphered.

"The ship was too badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power. It was built of an unknown metal resembling somewhat a mixture of aluminum and silver, and it must have weighed several tons.

"The town is full of people today who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of the strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place tomorrow."

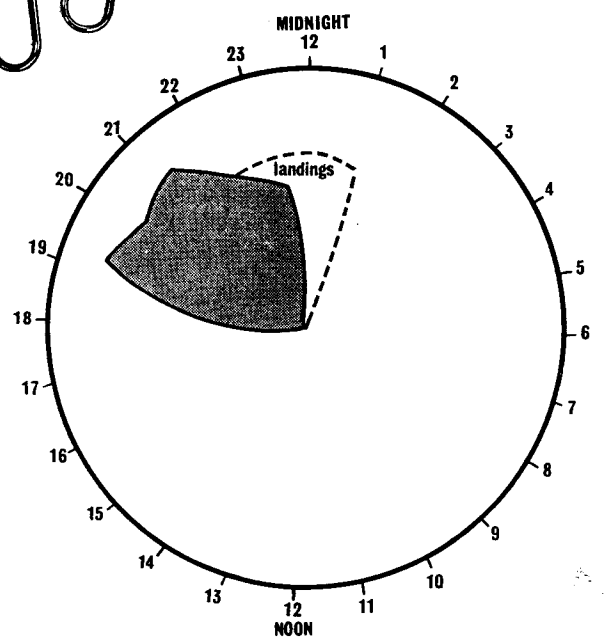
**FOOTNOTE:** The grave of the alleged spaceman was never found and also Mr. W.J. Weems never really existed. However, since Aurora shortly afterwards vanished from the maps, as so many communities in that area were short-lived the real truth of this incredible case will probably never be known. Perhaps somewhere a family might still possess the remains of a "flying saucer" ... and perhaps the key to the enigma.

SSS, N-54, 1-909

1.896-97

TABLE I  
CALIFORNIA SIGHTINGS—NOVEMBER 1896

DATE		LOCALES REPORTING
Sunday	15	San Andreas
Monday	16	Sacramento, Oakland
Tuesday	17	Oakland
Wednesday	18	Oak Park
Thursday	19	No data
Friday	20	Waterford, Oakland
Saturday	21	No data
Sunday	22	San Francisco, Alameda, Sacramento
Monday	23	Oakland, Berkley, Antioch, Chico
Tuesday	24	Oakland, Red Bluff, Hanford, Vacaville, San Leandro, San Jose
Wednesday	25	Sacramento, Pasadena, Fresno, Los Angeles, Hayward, Petaluma, San Lorenzo, East Oakland
Thursday	26	(Thanksgiving Holiday) Oakland, Robinson's Ferry, Arno, Monterey, East San Jose, Modesto
Friday	27	Oakland, Alameda
Saturday	28	Salinas
Sunday	29	No data



APPROXIMATE TIMES OF SIGHTINGS—  
APRIL, 1897

9 p.m.—25% of all sightings
8 p.m.—20%
10 p.m.—20%
12 p.m.—15%
Remaining 20% were scattered throughout the early evening, early morning, and daylight hours

have also seemed to follow a regular schedule. For example, they appeared nightly around 8.00 p.m. in Point Pleasant, W. Va., during March and April, 1967. Natural phenomena would not, of course, adhere to such a strict timetable.)

Table 2 illustrates the times of the sightings.

There were additional sightings in California during December, 1896, but the "flap" seems to have built-up and tapered off during that single week in November. The peak was reached on November 25, a Wednesday. The newspapers were filled with speculations about a "secret inventor" who had perfected a wonderful "airship" and they tried to keep the matter alive after the sightings subsided. But the sightings subsided nevertheless. The "secret inventor" flew off as mysteriously as he had come.

There were daylight and dusk sightings of a cigar-shaped object and these were well-publicized, leading everyone to assume that anything unusual in the sky was that eerie "airship". Most of the night-time sightings were of brilliant lights, not of a cigar-shaped "airship".

The sightings occurred simultaneously in scattered areas, indicating (if not proving) that more than one "airship" was involved. Powerful spotlights were frequently reported, projecting blinding beams towards the ground. There are, of course, many contemporary reports of this same thing. Coloured lights were also observed, but the majority were a dazzling white.

There were also a few landing and contact reports. One man even claimed that he was taken for a fast ride to Hawaii aboard the "airship".

Now for a bit of research. If you have a copy of *Project Blue Book Report 14*, turn to Fig. 31 (p. 47), a map of the United States outlining sightings reported to the USAF between 1947-52. You will note that one of the heaviest concentrations of sightings in the entire

country is centred around the San Francisco area—a total of 338, blanketing approximately the same places "invaded" back in November, 1896. The sightings in these areas have been numerous and consistent throughout the 1960s. We might conclude that the UFOs are especially interested in this region and have at least been keeping it under observation since 1896!

Already we have two fragmentary "facts": the objects have been repeatedly (or consistently) active in the same area for 72 years, and they were, for a reason, following a timetable—a definite plan of activity as far back as 1896. They moved swiftly into the area and were most active in the middle of the week.

Things quietened down for several months. Then, in March, 1897, strange lights and aerial objects reappeared in the United States, this time in the midwest and northern states, particularly around Michigan. Then they seemed to spread out from the midwest. This pattern still prevails. Several recent "flaps" seem to have begun in the midwest and fanned out.

I have laid out all the available reports from April, 1897, according to dates, times and geographical factors, and here again the "flap" patterns are apparent and consistent.

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ANO 1969  
MES JW

"A Strange Story is going that Fleet of Ships have been Seen in the Air in Some part of the Bay of Fundy. Mr. Darrow is lately from there by Land. I enquired of him. He Says they were Said to be Seen at New Minas, at one Mr. Ratchford's, by a Girl, about Sunrise, & that the Girl being frightened, Called out, & two men that were in the House went out & Saw the Same Sight, being 15 ships and a Man forward of them with his hand Stretched out. The Ships made to the Eastward. They were So Near that the people Saw their Sides & ports. The Story did not obtain universal Credit, but Some people believed it. My Own Opinion is that it was only in Imagination, as the Cloud at Sunrise might Make Some Such appearance, which being Improved by Imagination, might be all they Saw. Exceedingly pleasant day & Evening."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Perkins was a merchant and judge by profession, and evidently a skeptic by nature.

### Airship

When the great Airship Wave overtook the US, it certainly did not overlook Canada. There were many Airship sightings in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, in the East, and a few reports scattered across the country. What was not known until recently was that the Province of British Columbia had an incredible number of Airship reports that have never been fully documented. We are just now beginning to unearth these reports and place them on the record. In referring to some of these Canadian Airship reports, it should be noted that some of the "balloon" allusions refer to an explorer named Andre[s]<sup>3</sup>, who was attempting to balloon to the North Pole from Norway. This was much on the minds of Canadians at the time, and many sightings were assumed to be of the Andre balloon. Typical of the BC Airship reports is this from 12 August 1896:

Credible information has been received by [Indian Department] agent Lomas from two Indian parties separated by a long distance. At the time of observation the Andre balloon had been sighted in Lat. 55.15, Long 27. 40 pursuing a near northerly course.

[From] Victoria, August 11. There was a balloon flitting around over the northern portion of British Columbia early in July, or else more than one person was deceived by his eyes.....an Indian boy saw what he took to be a balloon [and] he reported the fact to Indian agent Lloyd at Hazelton.....[when] a week later a party of trappers headed by Chief Ghail of Kitapioux arrived at Hazelton and reported that they had seen a balloon on July 3rd, the residents of that district came to the conclusion that Andre and his party had passed over them. It could hardly have been Andre however as latest reports from Christiana, Spitzbergen on Friday last he had not started on his journey and in fact was contemplating a postponement until next year. A balloon was undoubtedly seen however and the question is now puzzling everyone here, who it is and where did it come?<sup>4</sup>

That very same day, the following report came out of Rossland, in the interior of the Province of BC:

It told of a strange aerial body that approached the town, paused momentarily above a mountain peak, made seven wide circles in the sky, and then sped away on a straight course. The thing was



described as a "luminous ball of fire that glowed amidst a halo of variegated colours." The object took a quarter of an hour to complete its maneuvers and was watched by many citizens of Rossland.<sup>5</sup>

Moving ahead almost a year, we see the airship making an appearance in the Province of Manitoba:

The "what-is-it?" has been seen in Winnipeg.... Saturday night was the date chosen for the appearance of the airship and the lights of the mysterious machine were in full view of many citizens for full fifteen minutes. The light of the strange aerial vessel came into full view about 9 o'clock on the eastern horizon in the direction of Stony Mountain.... Only the bare outline of some dark object could be seen besides the strong beacon light, evidently shown from the "masthead" of the aerial craft. There can be no doubt of the presence of a strange visitor on Saturday night, as its transit was witnessed by many reputable citizens.

The last point reported from was North Portal, NWT, where about two weeks ago a strange object was noticed in the air, and passed over the town quite as rapidly as the "machine" noticed here on Saturday night.<sup>6</sup>

Later in the summer of 1897, the following appeared under the headline, "A Mysterious Visitor.":

Have you seen the light in the heavens?...if not, you are not up to date. It has been hovering in the skies of Vancouver almost every night this week, and has been viewed by many...Last night the strange object was noticed to the north of the city across the city traveling in an easterly direction. The luminous ball of fire or airship as some call it was closely watched. It approached with great swiftness, paused in midair, then surrounded itself with flashes of colour and moved towards the northeast. At times it looked like a ball of fire at others it had a dull lustre and small particles of fire would shoot from the great glowing mass. N.C. Schon of Burnaby saw the luminous body while on the steamer Rithet on Monday night. He states that it moved parallel to the sea far below the star line and looked like a bright red star surrounded by a luminous halo. It was cigar shaped and seemed to travel slowly and occasionally there seemed to drop a shower of sparks like the sputtering of an arc light.<sup>7</sup>

When the end of 1897 arrived, the UFOs themselves — in this case the airships — were gone, but the phenomenon never does actually go away. Not really. It moves. Or changes. Or as they say so accurately in the television business, it may simply "go on hiatus."

In 1908, the airship phenomenon reappeared. This report, though not exactly from Canada, is from somewhere quite close by:

IS IT MARS OR AN AIRSHIP? TOWNSPEOPLE OF KENT, WASHINGTON MUCH EXCITED BY MYSTERIOUS LIGHT IN HEAVENS

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SN, SPRING-69

## Contribution à l'étude des phénomènes insolites de 1896 à 1898 <sup>(1)</sup>

C.I.E.S.-OURANOS

par Jean SÉNELIER

Dans un article publié dans le n° 16 d'OURANOS, j'émettais l'avis que « s'il y a manifestation d'êtres extra-terrestres, elle n'est compréhensible que si elle a débuté depuis peu de temps, disons, par exemple, à partir des événements de 1897 ».

Il m'a toujours semblé que ces remarquables phénomènes aériens devraient être « repensés » et être l'objet d'une étude toute particulière parmi nos multiples tentatives pour percer le mystère des « objets volants » inconnus.

En réalité, il faut dire que l'année précédente et celle qui suivit sont aussi à marquer d'une pierre blanche et ces répétitions dans la nature des phénomènes sont à noter. Indiquons donc le processus de ces événements.

Le 27 mars 1896, selon une communication de M. Paul Rouland à Dragueville (Manche) adressée à la Société Astronomique de France (Bulletin de la S.A.F.,

1896, p. 228), vers 10 h 35 du soir, un météore de grandeur apparente approximativement égale à 3 fois le diamètre de la lune apparut dans la Constellation du Lion. Il décrivit une ELLIPSE, passant par la Balance et le Scorpion et se dirigeant vers la constellation de la Vierge, s'éteignit entre Saturne et l'Epi; traînée lumineuse pendant 15 secondes

Le même Bulletin de la S.A.F. (1895, p. 288) signalait que le 11 août à Avignon, on observa un « bolide dédoublé » avec une séparation de 1° environ. Enfin, le Bulletin de 1895 (p. 376) décrit le phénomène suivant observé en fin de journée: « Le 21 novembre 1896 à 5 h 15 du soir, direction E.N.E. observation (à Fontenay-le-Comte) d'un météore lumineux de diamètre apparent égal à celui de Vénus et d'un blanc pur. Il décrit une courbe vers la terre de 25° environ au-dessus de l'horizon en laissant une faible traînée lumineuse. Visible pendant 2 à 3 secondes pendant lesquelles il a décrit une

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# FSR BOOKSHELF — 16

# 1.896-97

Janet & Colin Bord

New UFO books reviewed by...

FROM November 1896 to April 1897, thousands of people in the U.S.A. reported seeing bright lights moving across the night sky. In some cases they said that they saw the shadowy structure of an airship above the light. The phenomenon was widely reported in the press and rapidly became known as the mystery airship. In the 1960s UFO researchers unearthed some of these reports and published their findings, which showed that the reported performance of the mystery airship was inconsistent with the level of technical development which airship designers had achieved at that time. Since then, the mystery airships have joined that group of peripheral mysteries which appear to have some connexion with the main body of ufology, but which continue to evade precise investigation.

early Californian wave was privately distributed by Loren Gross, but in The Great Airship Mystery (Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, hardback, \$9.95, 212 pages, index, illustrated) Daniel Cohen provides a detailed report and analysis of these events, and their strangeness can here be fully appreciated. The author starts with the earliest sightings in California in November 1896 and follows the reports as they moved eastwards during the next six months. He shows how the airships were reported in the press, with much the same mixture of irresponsibility and ridicule that later UFO reports received, and how the rivalries and ambitions of newspaper owners coloured the reporting. The public expectation was that a secretive inventor had solved the mystery of flight and would very soon reveal himself, and there were of course various individuals who claimed to be he, but after a brief blaze of publicity they faded once more into obscurity.

Many articles on the subject have been published in UFO journals, and one booklet dealing with the

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Venus. No one will ever know.

### NOTE BY EDITOR, FSR

Like pretty well everyone else no doubt, I have seen exhaustive pieces of research thoroughly debunking every one of these various cases. But somehow I don't feel able to accept that they were all faked by humans. And I note that, in his latest book DIMENSIONS, Dr. Jacques Vallée still accepts as genuine the case at the Hamilton Ranch at Leroy, Kansas, on April 19, 1897, and I think I am correct in saying that Dr. J. Allen Hynck was also inclined to accept it. (Though, as readers may recall, the version given above is not the full one. For the alien craft was actually reported to have lassoed and carried off a calf from one of Mr. Hamilton's paddocks. And *that* rings a bell, doesn't it!) All the same, great effort has gone into proving the Hamilton story to be a fake. And we can fully appreciate that in 1896 and 1897 many 'excellent folk' thought it fully justified to spread any sort of lie in order to prevent the truth from getting out. *After all, don't they still do precisely the same in 1989!*

"Sioux City, Iowa. May 11. P.E. Jewell of this place claims he has an air ship which actually flies. Thus far he has not entrusted his person to the tender mercies of his craft, but a ship of sufficient size to carry a man is now being constructed on the pattern of a successful model already tested. The model soared to a height of 100 feet and was then pulled in."

The report goes on to give details of this wondrous machine.

The similarities between the old and modern UFO sightings are remarkable. Detractors called the witnesses 'deluded', 'lunatics', or worse. Airships were 'Venus', 'balloons', 'kites', the usual standbys.

The author of this present article does not claim to know what those people saw 90 years ago. *One thing is certain, though. They did see something.* It may have been humans flying before it was officially recorded; pre-Spanish-American War fever; aliens; or the planet

...ne will be puffing and wheezing.

Lay out a scale-size track or course and place an animal native to the hemisphere on it and start him running...away he goes and continues long after our muscle-bound friend has stopped. Something must be lacking in the make-up of our athlete. Let us try something.

Let us strap a tank of oxygen on our runner and see what happens. Away he goes, running

Perhaps these recent high school and college kid kicks with LSD and the other "mind-drugs" are a clue to the fact that the brain needs some out side help. - You can scare a stubborn mule into action with a loud noise (sometimes) but don't produce that loud noise by placing a stick of dynamite under him. Could the LSD be the stick of dynamite which may ruin the machine, while the same and lasting effect could be obtained by replacing that

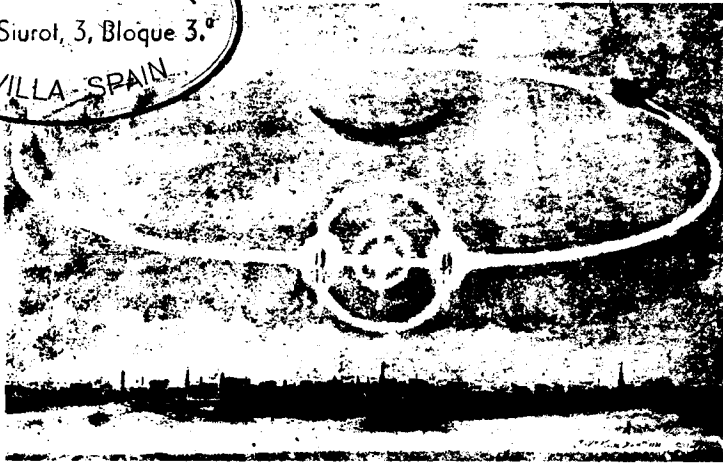
Could these lumps of marsh gas and weather balloons that cause planes to scramble every time they are sighted be the fellows who started the experiment, or their successors, who are trying to keep us from finding out? Or are they these same fellows trying to let us know?

T'is said by some contactees that aliens walk amongst us. Could it be that these experimenters, whoever they are...are beginning to feel that the ex-

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SEP-89



IGNACIO DARNAUD  
REMEMBER WAY BACK WHEN ... ?  
Manuel Siurot, 3, Bloque 3.  
SEVILLA, SPAIN.



## Colorado's UFO of 1881

By ALICE WRIGHT WALLACE The Denver Post • May 29, 1966

ON A Monday evening, Feb. 14, 1881, residents of Denver gazed at the sky where, glowing in ghostly yellow-white light, was an enormous halo—a celestial ring with the moon for a setting.

The Rocky Mountain News reported: "Encircling the moon, but traveling from its upper edges, was an immense semi-opaque yellow-white circle of immense size which seemed to overshadow the whole of the city. Clearly defined upon this, was observed a double-crested half moon. From the bosom of the yellow-opaque mass, there at intervals issued bright floods of light of a pale amber color, mixed with flashes of blue and white. The phenomena lasted for over two hours . . . when they suddenly disappeared, and left the sky clear and cloudless."

It was an awesome sight. So much so that a W. H. Lawrence, 408 Larimer St., Denver, apparently found it profitable to print and sell pictures of the spectacle. These, as seen here, bore the overline "Colorado's Valentine," and

an underline, "Von Keith's Colored Diagram of the Paraselenae—as seen at Denver, Colo., on Monday evening, Feb. 14, 1881."

Apparently the sight was seen in Colorado Springs, where the Gazette had an explanation:

"The whole phenomenon is due to minute crystals of ice, such as constitute the highest clouds, but which on that cold evening extended from near the earth's surface to a considerable height in the air. These crystals are generally long six-sided prisms. . . . The moonlight (was) reflected from these faces. . . ."

Scientists call this a paraselene (*para*, alongside or akin to, and *selene*, the Greek word for moon). The plural form is paraselenae. Webster defines a paraselene as "a luminous appearance seen in connection with lunar halos."

From that night (and day) on, people have continued to see strange sights in the skies. Some fly, and are UFOs. Few, however, could have been as beautiful as the 1881 Valentine Night show over Denver. Ray Phielschiefer

## Jet-Propelled Bomber-Balloon Studied in 1885

WHAT was probably the first jet-propelled military aircraft was a balloon thrust by compressed air developed by Gen. Russell Thayer, a Philadelphian, in 1885. A description published on June 13 of that year in the London *Graphic*, has been unearthed by the *Aeroplane*, a British aviation magazine.

General Thayer, working on instructions from the U. S. Army Ordnance Board, set out to develop "a monster airship, which is likely to be one of the most destructive implements of battle known to modern science. It will have an ascending force of seven tons, will cost \$10,000, and will have a length of 66

feet and a diameter of 60 feet," the long-forgotten article states.

Cigar-shaped, pointed at both ends, the balloon was supposed to move through the air at a speed of 30 miles an hour. Motive power was compressed air, "accumulated by machinery and discharged at the rear end."

The airship was designed to be steered in any direction, and "tons of dynamite can be dropped as it sails over a fortification or a fleet of ships."

No report of its completion or performance in test flights was given. There is no record at Army headquarters in Washington, today, that it was ever built.

## 'UFO' Of 1897

By FRANK MASQUELETTE

HOUSTON (AP) — Yellowed newspaper clippings tell of a series of sightings across Texas in 1897 of the "mysterious airship."

They add up to what might be called:

The Great Airship Flap of 1897.

Some of the accounts resemble accounts nowadays of Unidentified Flying Objects.

Consider this report from the 1897 Houston Daily Post:

"Childress, Texas, April 17 — The much talked-of airship was seen here last night about 1:16 o'clock. The Rev. J. W. Smith was the first to discover the curious aerial monster.

"He thought at first that it was a star shooting, but after watching it a moment or two, saw that it was not . . .

"It soon disappeared, traveling in a westerly direction. The Rev. Mr. Smith thinks that it must have been 2,000 feet high and traveling very fast."

Or this one:

"Longview, Texas, April 20 — Last night about 9:30, the Post correspondent and family, on returning from church, saw the so-called airship.

"A bright light, seemingly about the size of Venus, moved swiftly to the northwest, disappearing beneath the horizon.

"In a few minutes, it reappeared . . . The light emitted a series of intermittent flashes, of a steel color. No car (cabin) was seen."

Here's another:

"Atlanta, Texas, April 19 — There was considerable excitement here today, caused by a visitation last night by the mysterious airship.

"It was first seen by Jim Nelson, a farmer . . . His attention was attracted by a peculiar noise, and, looking up, he discovered the mysterious aerial traveler.

"It seemed to be descending straight to the earth with great rapidity and Mr. Nelson's hair stood out with fright . . .

"But within two or three hundred feet of the earth, it paused for an instant . . . then moved off at a rate of speed about equal to that of an ordinary passenger train."

The Atlanta dispatch says the airship was seen by other citizens when it sailed over the city at 5 to 15 miles an hour. Most described it as cigar-shape, and some said it had long wings on either side.

Stories of the Atlanta incident became succeeding absurd. Some viewers claimed to have talked with the airship's crewmen. One man said the pilot told him, "We will be in Greece day after tomorrow."

Another man said he detected three men on board passing out temperance tracts and singing,

"Nearer My God to Thee."

About a week later came this report in the Houston Daily Post of April 28, 1897:

"Merkel, Texas, April 26 — Some parties returning from church last night noticed a heavy object dragging along with a rope attached.

"They followed it until in crossing the railroad it caught on a rail. On looking up they saw what they supposed was the airship.

"It was not near enough to get an idea of the dimensions. A light could be seen protruding from several windows; one bright light in front like the headlight of a locomotive.

"After some 10 minutes, a man was seen descending the rope; he came near enough to be plainly seen; he wore a light blue sailor suit, was small in size.

"He stopped when he discovered parties at the anchor and cut the rope below him and sailed off in the northeast direction.

"The anchor is now on exhibition at the blacksmith shop of Elliott & Miller and is attracting the attention of hundreds of people."

Another bizarre account was found in the April 19, 1897, edition of the Dallas Morning News:

"Aurora, Wise County, April 17 — About 6 o'clock this morning the early risers of Aurora were astonished at the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing throughout the country . . .

"It sailed directly over the public square, and when it reached the north part of town, collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank and destroying the judge's flower garden.

"The pilot of the ship is supposed to have been the only one aboard, and while his remains are badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not an inhabitant of this world.

"Mr. T. J. Weems, the U. S. Signal Service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he (the pilot) was a native of the Planet Mars . . .

"Papers found . . . are written in some unknown hieroglyphics . . . This ship was too badly wrecked to form any conclusion as to its construction or motive power . . .

"The town is full of people today who are viewing the wreck and gathering specimens of strange metal from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place at noon tomorrow."

OLEADA

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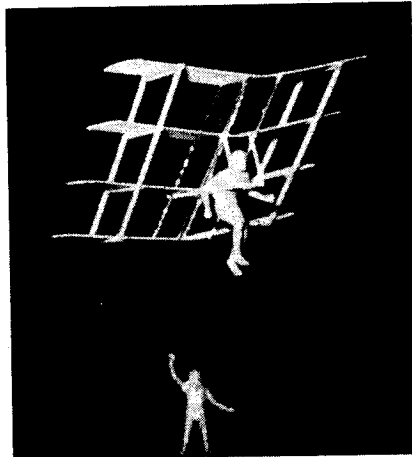
1.896-97 FATE

**MORE TO BE SAID**

In your October 1975 issue you have a brief article by George Wagner concerning Matthew Sellers and "The First Airplane." Your readers may be interested in additional information on Mr. Sellers.

Matthew Bacon Sellers (1869-1932) recorded his experiments in diaries (still extant) from 1889 through 1909 and in a laboratory daybook from 1903 to 1914. Extant correspondence covers the years 1899 to 1926 and his sons have original photographic negatives of Sellers' designs. As of December 30, 1973, Sellers' Kentucky home—a lavish mansion called "Blakemore"—and his laboratory were being considered for restoration as a museum.

Sellers' most famous designs were called "quadruplanes," for they had four wings arranged in a staggered line front to back and top to bottom (see photo of model). These were patented in 1907. In 1908 he added a seven horsepower engine and a chassis with retracting wheels and the first flights in this craft were made on December 28, 1908. He continued to make improvements



F-76

**REPORT FROM THE READERS**

OLEADA 1.896-97

**AERIAL DOGFIGHT**

I have information from Mr. Edward Peck, an aviation historian of Jeffersonville, Ind., which leads me to say unequivocally that George Wagner's article, "The First Airplane" (October 1975 FATE) is inadequately researched.

For the past 10 years Mr. Peck has been compiling data for a book on Matthew Sellers and is well-informed concerning the legend that Sellers flew before the Wright brothers. Mr. Peck generously allows me to quote from his letter:

"I have made innumerable visits to Carter County, Ky., during the past 10 years and I must say that the popular legends about Sellers which circulate there are only that—fanciful tales born of ignorance of what really took place and considerably embellished in the retelling over the years.

"One must remember that the people of that community are generally very unsophisticated when it comes to interpreting unfamiliar technical developments. This was certainly true of those backwoods folk around 1897-1911 when an educated 'outsider' settled among them to develop his flying machine. Some of the tales one hears there surpass the wildest excesses of fairy stories!

"Basically I think those people are honest—but they want so badly to believe that Sellers flew before the Wrights that they have unconsciously transformed wild speculation into gospel truth. Since 1941 several newspaper reporters have done imaginative stories on Sellers, building their reports on interviews with equally imaginative citizens of Carter County, most of whom were small children or not yet born when the flying events took place. I suppose the flattery of being interviewed may have caused these persons to stretch the truth more than a little and to add their own speculations in

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AG-75

## REPORT FROM THE READERS

few "the first airplane" is in error. I was led astray by undocumented claims published as fact by the Northern Kentucky Historical Society in Paul Lewis Atkinson's book, *Kentucky—Land of Legend and Lore*.

I have no real excuse, however, I did a lousy job of research—although it seemed sufficient at the time. — *George Wagner, Fort Thomas, Ky.*


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the hope of acquiring personal publicity. To such minds, once any statement gets into print it is documented truth.' Thus they hope to bask in the reflected glory of a local boy' beating the Wrights!

"Fortunately, I have access to Sellers' own handwritten diaries and journals from 1888 through 1914. I can therefore say with some authority that he did not fly with power until December 28, 1908. This is verified in Sellers' own article, 'The Sellers Lightplane,' which appeared in the magazine *Aviation* dated February 8, 1927. As for the many wild claims made in his behalf I have addressed audiences at the Smithsonian and elsewhere in an effort to put the record straight. Sellers was indeed an important aviation pioneer but the sensational claims made for him can only detract from his real and substantial achievements."

As to certain other details in Wagner's story, Mr. Peck further states: "Wagner's short article in FATE is riddled through and through with errors of fact. The Kentucky village is named 'Grahn,' not 'Brawn.' Sellers was not a local man but a native of Baltimore. His airplane was not a monoplane but a quadruplane (four-winged). Sellers did not 'devise' his engine; it was purchased from Duthell-Chalmers in France. Only the wings and tail surfaces were covered, not the frame. Sellers did not take off from ruts in the ground but from a wooden runway. He did not continue his flights 'to 1902 then fade into obscurity.' He continued flights at Grahn through 1911 and elsewhere until 1914 and still later in 1926-1927."

It seems that Mr. Peck has spoken the final word.—*Gary S. Mangiacopra, Milford, Conn.*

## THE AUTHOR REPLIES:

Obviously the widespread belief in Carter County that Matthew Sellers

## REPORT FROM THE READERS

and tests from 1908 to 1911, obtaining additional patents. This was the lightest airplane ever flown and it required the least power.

Perhaps the greatest significance of Sellers' "staggered quadruplane" design is that it is inherently stable, requiring neither tail planes nor other complicated equipment common to other planes.

In 1912 Matthew Sellers was appointed by President Taft to the Aerodynamical Laboratory Committee for Aeronautics which in time became the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics and more recently, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In 1915, as an authority on aeronautics, Sellers was appointed to the Naval Consulting Board which was chaired by Thomas Alva Edison. Following World War I, Sellers married and settled in Ardsley-on-Hudson, N. Y., where he continued private aeronautical research until his death in April 1932.

Therefore, it is not quite true that he "faded into obscurity" as your author has written. He is not without honor in the early history of aviation.—*Gordon Coddling, Kingman, Ariz.*

## CANCER CURE SUPPRESSED?

I believe you will discover, upon investigation, that Dr. T. H. Moray of Salt Lake City, Utah, has developed and patented a device which



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Airship Tales

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A Number of Dallas Citizens are their Authors

Cooper Nott returned from Longview yesterday. He said to a news reporter: "At Longview on Friday night I saw the airship. It's not a fake. I saw it with these eyes. Charles Foster, the station agent at Longview, and Col. Thomas Kingsley were eye-witnesses and will corroborate what I have said."

Joseph A. McMurray of Mineola was in the city yesterday. "This airship business is a fake," He said. "Why Tom Breen, our new postmaster, sleeps with one eye open and he has not caught a glimpse of this airship. I don't take any stock in the stories published. Neither does Tom Breen."

Maurice Kahn, clerk of the police court, is authority for the statement that Messrs. William Boll, Jr., B.O. Marshall and A. Nussbaumer claim to have seen the airship on the ground about nine miles west of Dallas Sunday afternoon about 2 o'clock while out hunting. They will, he says, make affidavit to this if necessary.

Manton Carrick and a number of friends sent up three small balloons lashed together with lanterns attached from the corner of Olive and Live Oak streets last night. The balloon floated across North Dallas. The boys paraded the streets in that section of the city yelling at the top of their voice, "There's the airship!" All the inhabitants turned out and viewed the light in the sky with exclamations of wonder.

At 9 o'clock last night Mr. J. W. Bruit phoned the News from the corner of Allen and Juliet streets: "I've seen the airship. It was out near the McKinney avenue schoolhouse and going toward Oak Cliff. I was in my buggy and whipped up my horse in a vain effort to get close to it. It was very bulky."

An hour later George Saunderson, fireman at the waterworks phoned the News as follows: "The airship passed over us ten minutes ago. I got a good look at the ship. It has three large windows and was making very fast time."

---

He Did Not See the Ship

Ladonia, Fannin Co., Tex. April 18--(to the News)--Will you do the kindness to say through your columns that the gentleman who informed you that I had seen the so-called "airship" was certainly very much off his base, and did me quite an injustice when he said that I was among the number who had seen it. If such a thing is in existence to-day I confess that I would be glad to see it, but so far have seen nothing of the kind, and have never made any such statement to anyone. I know your informant and really think that he did this as a joke, but in justice to myself think that he did very wrong.--  
R. N. Burt.



---

was complete and ready to perform its mission.

As soon as secretary P. H. Benjamin of the Booth flying machine company returns to Chicago from Montana, which will be within a few weeks, New York parties will be ordered to commence work on the balloon which forms the upper part of the machine.

The start for the trial trip will be made not later than the end of May.

Dallas Morning News, 21 April 1897, p. 7

Believes In The Airship

A Chicago Man Says One Now in the Air Is That of a Rural Inventor  
Chicago Journal, April 12.



Oscar D. Booth of 158 South Peoria Street, who himself claims to have solved the problem of aerial navigation, firmly believes the strange object seen by Chicagoans is indeed an airship.

He thinks the mysterious craft was made and is being operated by an inventor named Charles Clinton, Residing near Dodge City, Ford County, Kansas.

The airship theory set forth in Clinton's patent papers at Wahsington, is a true though bungling solution of the problem, according to Booth. The fact that the curious object was first seen in Kansas strengthens Booth's belief.

The Chicago inventor has not seen the aerial ship, but wants no other proof than the word given by so many reputable citizens.

"Why couldn't it be an airship?" he said testily. "The reason so many people doubt the reports is that they do not believe in airships. Aerial navigation is possible. It is easy, and in a few weeks I will prove it by myself flying far above the earth.

"That a machine has already been launched and is even now soaring through the air I have little doubt. Why various persons have seen the wings and the cigar-shaped car. They are not all fools, and the reports come from so many places too."

Referring to the Kansas ship, Mr. Booth spoke good words for his rival. "His machine is practical, I am sure. When I first read of the airship being seen over Kansas, I ran through the papers in my possession to see what inventor resided in Kansas, I found the plans which this Ford County man had filed. He has wings, or large propellers, places on both ends of his cigar-shaped car, and has two engines. Above is a balloon. The general shape of this machine corresponds with the description given of the one flying over Chicago. It is likely the same one."

"Do you not think it unlikely a man could build and launch his machine in the air and keep it a secret?"

"Not at all, I judge the flying machine seen over Chicago is one made only for a trial trip--probably a small one.

"It would be very easy to take a medium-sized ship to a secluded place, put together the parts and start it off. Now, with my invention--" and when he said "my invention" his eyes brightened and he talked more rapidly--"I could leave Chicago without a soul knowing it. My car is but nine feet long, and could easily be driven to some quiet spot."

Booth expects to be cutting the clouds, side by side, perhaps, with his Kansas rival, within a month.

"I have everything ready but the balloon," he said, and anxious to prove his words he showed his visitor his invention. Car and frame work were in place. Large frames for wings fanned the air as though chafing at delay. A little engine

Évolution de la forme SV dans la SF jusqu'en 1947		Évolution de la forme SV dans la réalité jusqu'en 1947	
Filière wellsienne (court-circuit)	Filière vernienne (progressive)	Cas d'imagerie post-arnoldienne isolés (imagerie parfaite)	Vagues
Quelques cas parfaits d'atterrissages fictifs dès le début du siècle (Ex. : Moselli 1924, <i>le Messager de la planète</i> )	La grande masse des fictions. Tour à tour : 1) Ballons fantômes 2) Avions fantômes 3) Aéronefs extraterrestres	Quelques cas ici et là depuis le début du siècle. Ex. : le cas de Guadaluajara.	La grande masse des rapports. 1) Ballons fantômes 2) Avions fantômes 3) SV à partir de 1947

### A. ROBUR LE CONQUÉRANT ET LA VAGUE AMERICAINE DE 1897

#### UNE COÏNCIDENCE EXPLOSIVE

C'est peut-être ici que la précision atteint une coïncidence réellement explosive, car elle implique, nous nous en rendons compte, des détails d'une précision telle que nous n'avons plus le choix qu'entre deux types d'hypothèses :

1. La vague de 1897 est un vaste trucage mené par des lecteurs de Jules Verne à des fins d'expérience ou de manipulation des masses.

2. Des pans entiers échappent à notre conception de la réalité.

Or, comme l'homme de 1897 n'avait, de toute évidence, ni les moyens matériels pour organiser un trucage d'une telle ampleur, ni, ce qui est plus important, les motivations (car il s'agit là d'une idée moderne), il nous va falloir envisager la seconde hypothèse.

Rappelons brièvement que la vague de 1897 débute à la fin de mars et se développe pendant le mois d'avril dans tout le Middle West américain. Elle présente partout les mêmes motifs : de grandes machines volantes, de conception baroque, survolent les villes du Middle West, où elles sont vues par des milliers de personnes. Quelques atterrissages ici et là sont rapportés; l'équipage prétend être en train d'essayer une machine nouvelle et se plaint d'ennuis mécaniques. A l'occasion, il demande des vivres, comme le relate le témoignage de William Megiveron<sup>1</sup>, paru dans le *State Republican*. Les vaisseaux aiment balayer, de leurs puissants projecteurs, les villes qu'ils survolent de nuit. Un peu partout, des foules s'attroupent pour les observer. Ici et là, les étranges vaisseaux envoient des messages dans des objets qu'ils laissent tomber, où il est mentionné qu'une machine nouvelle due à quelque inventeur génial est à l'essai...

#### COMPORTEMENT GÉNÉRAL : SON ET LUMIÈRE !

« Autre différence à noter entre le bateau et le moderne UFO est que la lente trajectoire du premier l'amène à survoler les grandes aires urbaines. Omaha, Milwaukee, Chicago et d'autres villes furent ainsi visitées; à chaque fois, des foules se rassemblèrent pour surveiller l'objet. Autrement le bateau fait preuve de toutes les activités typiques d'un UFO : "planer", jeter des sondes — sur Newton, Iowa, le 10 avril, par exemple —, changer de route brusquement, changer d'altitude à toute vitesse, tourner, atterrir et repartir, balayer la campagne avec de puissants rayons de lumière<sup>2</sup>. »

C'est très exactement ce que douze ans plus tôt faisait, sous la plume de J. Verne, l'*Albatros*, vaisseau de Robur le Conquérant. Et ce, au détail près. Le comportement de l'*Albatros* est très exactement pour ceux qui en sont le témoin, ce mélange d'ostentation et d'esquive que l'on retrouvera la décennie suivante dans les observations américaines.

Voici l'*Albatros* arrivé au-dessus de Paris<sup>3</sup> :

« Et même, l'ingénieur Robur voulut, sans doute, donner aux Parisiens le spectacle d'un météore que n'avaient pas prévu ses astronomes. Les fanaux de l'*Albatros* furent mis en activité. Deux gerbes brillantes se promenèrent sur les

RÉALITÉ

202

## AVVISTAMENTI NEL PASSATO

La notte del 26 settembre 1897, alle ore 2,30, un ingegnere russo osservò un pallone sospinto rapidamente verso sud est sopra la città di Yakovlevskaya. Il pallone aveva uno splendore fosforescente elettrico. Esso fu visibile per meno di tre minuti, scomparendo rapidamente verso l'orizzonte.

Lo storico dell'aviazione, Dale M. Titler, nel manoscritto originale del suo "Wings of Mystery" così commenta l'avvistamento: "Uno splendore elettrico? Rapidamente scomparso? Senza dubbio non è questo il pallone di Andree. Ma quale altra imbarcazione aerea ha potuto descrivere l'ingegnere?"

XXXX CT, A-70

Un giorno d'estate del 1897 (la data non è precisata) un giovane indiano presso Winnipeg, Canada, vide un "oggetto rassomigliante a un pallone che distribuiva una considerevole quantità di luce..."

Julio Verne:

"Robur le  
Conquérant"

(1.855). Descripció  
algo muy parecido  
a la olente 1896-97

B. Mehen A-Moya  
CERFA

"Come noi' ei eravamo incamminati per entrare in casa - disse il sig. Darrell al NICAP - io notai una luce lampeggiante nel cielo, a nord della nostra casa. L'oggetto proiettava alternativamente, e qualche volta simultaneamente, una luce rossa, verde e bianca mentre si muoveva a varie velocità verso est".

I due fratelli osservarono che un'altra luce lampeggiava dietro, nel cielo verso ovest. Lo strano oggetto rapidamente discese vicino al suolo, poi salì ad un'altezza di alcune centinaia di piedi. Emozionati i due testimoni videro l'U.F.O. cambiare direzione e dirigersi verso di loro.

"Entro due minuti - dichiarò Darrell in merito a questo secondo avvistamento - l'oggetto fu solo a 200 piedi dal nostro portico. Esso continuava ad abbassarsi e a salire ripetutamente e a volare avanti e indietro di fronte a noi. Come l'oggetto si sollevò abbastanza in alto la sua sagoma potette ancora essere vista nel cielo. Essa era a forma di cono.... un cono con la base in su. La luce era .... in alto .... L'oggetto non produsse alcun rumore benchè fosse passato davanti a noi. Rimanevamo paralizzati nell'osservare l'oggetto per 15 minuti prima che finalmente volasse lontano in direzione nord est. Ciò che noi vedemmo ci lasciò perplessi, senza parole e completamente imbarazzati". (U.F.O. INVESTIGATOR - settembre-ottobre 1969).

#### CENTRALI DI DISCHI VOLANTI NEL PERU'

Oscar Tejeira, dell'Istituto Peruviano Relazioni Interplanetarie, nello scorso giugno affermò che i ghiacciai di Salvanjay e di Ausangati del Perù sono centrali per operazioni di dischi volanti. Spesso si vedono dischi volanti nel cielo di Cuzco diretti verso i Ghiacciai suddetti dove molte spedizioni hanno raccolto campioni di minerali radioattivi e di estrema resistenza alle alte temperature.

#### AVVISTAMENTI NEL PASSATO (ANNO 1897)

≤ 1.949

Nella notte del 29 aprile 1897, alle ore 11,30, un enorme oggetto luminoso venne fuori dal nord e rallentò piano piano fermandosi alla fine su un ponte, negli Stati Uniti d'America. La gente si riversò fuori sulla strada per udire il chiasso di coloro che si davano ai piaceri a bordo della cosmonave, apparsa su Long Lake.

Parlare ad alta voce e musica, "l'uguale della quale mai era stato udito in questo posto", potettero essere uditi durante i 55 minuti dell'apparizione del misterioso velivolo. L'oggetto misurava 300 piedi, più 40 piedi l'estremità; in larghezza e altezza circa 90 piedi.

Proprio all'estremità cominciò a girare rapidamente lasciando cadere legato un uncino che afferrò uno degli osservatori a terra. Allora la aeronave volò lontano. L'uomo catturato ritornò da White Cloud il giorno seguente "e parlò della navigazione aerea". Dell'episodio parlò il giornale "Grand Traverse Herald".

Il 1° maggio 1897 il "SAGINAW EVENING NEWS" riferì che una scarpa di proporzioni gigantesche fu trovata sui binari della ferrovia presso lo Stabilimento di O'Donnell, Spenser e Co. e si ritenne che fosse caduta dal cielo. (rivista inglese "Flying Saucer Review", gennaio-febbraio 1969).

#### LE DICHIARAZIONI DEGLI ORGANISMI UFFICIALI GOVERNATIVI

L'ingegnere Wilbur B. Smith, esperto nel campo dell'elettronica, Capo dell'Ufficio militare canadese "Progetto Magnete", dichiarò al maggiore Donald E. Kehyoe:

CT, DIC-69



## HISTORIA CONTEMPORANEA DE NAVES AEREAS

La revista francesa *L'Année Scientifique* de 1864 registra una misiva del prestigioso científico Leverrier, que envió a la Academia de Ciencias francesa tres cartas de diferentes testigos que describían haber visto caer del cielo un cuerpo luminoso de afiladas puntas. En *Thunder and Lightning* cuenta Flammarion cómo el 20 de Agosto de 1890 el doctor Trecul, de la misma Academia de Ciencias francesa, observó un objeto de treinta y cinco a cuarenta metros de largo por veinticinco de ancho de tamaño aparente, de color anaranjado brillante, "cilíndrico y de extremidades ligeramente cónicas". Este dejó caer algo antes de desaparecer entre las nubes, dejando una estela luminosa. La revista *Monthly Weather Review* comenta cómo el 2 de Julio de 1907, en la población de Burlington, en Vermont, una especie de torpedo que estaba estacionado a unos quince metros por encima de los edificios dejó partir un objeto luminoso que provocó una tremenda explosión que sacudió la ciudad; de sus paredes y por unos agujeros en su estructura parecían desprenderse llamaradas y lentamente se fue escabullendo. E. W. Maunder, de la revista *Observatory*, se hallaba en el observatorio de Greenwich (Inglaterra) el 17 de Noviembre de 1882, cuando sobre el cielo nocturno se destacó de repente un disco luminoso de luz verdosa que cruzó rápidamente el firmamento. Al pasar por encima de la Luna comprobó que no era un disco, sino una especie de "torpedo". Todo el avistamiento duró casi dos minutos y fue apreciado por numerosas personas y científicos.

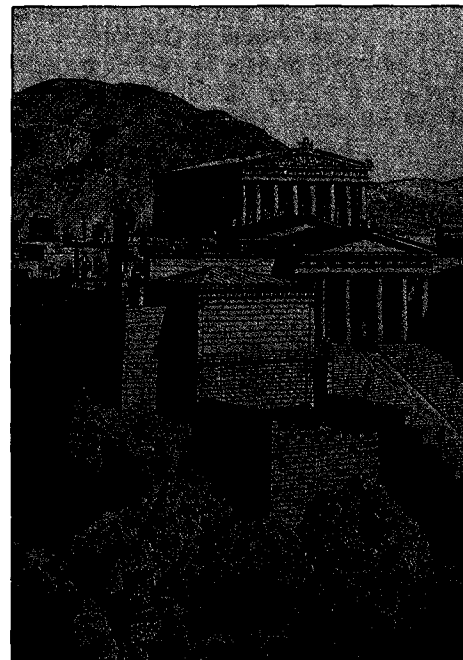
## CONCLUSION

De vez en cuando, en aquel entonces, los objetos celestes misteriosos tomaban seres humanos y se los llevaban en una nave para mostrarles maravillas (como continúan haciendo en la actualidad). En Lyon una muchedumbre se congregó para observar cómo descendía una aeronave; de ella salieron tres hombres y una mujer. La muchedumbre les acusó de ser magos enviados por el duque Grimaldo de Benevento, gran enemigo de Carlomagno. De poco les sirvió que se defendieran diciendo que eran franceses que habían sido llevados a otro mundo con la intención de que relataran qué habían visto allí. El abispo Agobardo, un sujeto inteligente, después de escucharlos decidió dejarles libres y salvarles de la hoguera porque "nadie puede bajar del cielo". De todas formas, otros humanos en las mismas circunstancias no tuvieron tanta suerte y fueron acusados de demonios, torturados y achicharrados en la lumbre de la hoguera.

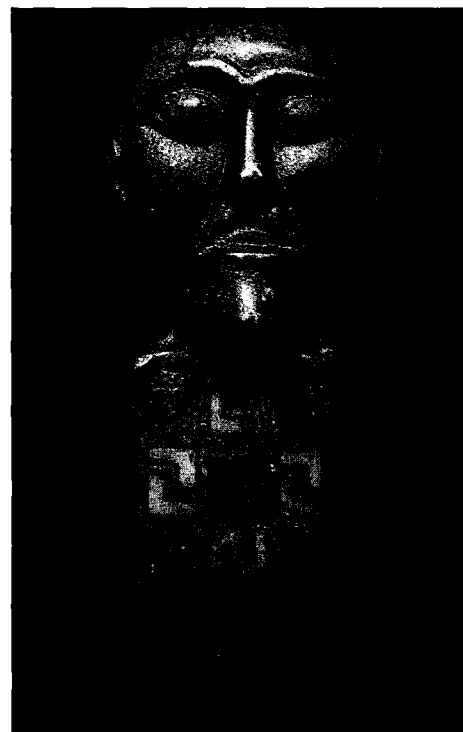
La duda surge. ¿Cómo es posible que estos conocimientos tan precisos, útiles y espectaculares sobre la construcción y uso de una aeronave se olvidaran o se perdieran sin que ningún sabio, sumo sacerdote, comerciante o poderoso monarca la guardase o construyese, aunque fuera tan solo para su propio beneficio en la guerra, la extensión de su religión, el transporte de mercancías preciosas o los viajes? Quizá el responsable fue una catástrofe mundial o, tal vez, que la civilización que mostró estas maravillas (que podemos aventurar como de posible procedencia atlantídeas, intraterrestre e incluso extraterrestre) fuera destruida o se marchase de nuestro entorno. La verdad es que la respuesta es probable que la conozcamos sólo si algún día los propios constructores de las aeronaves nos lo revelaran de primera mano.

Rafael CASARES

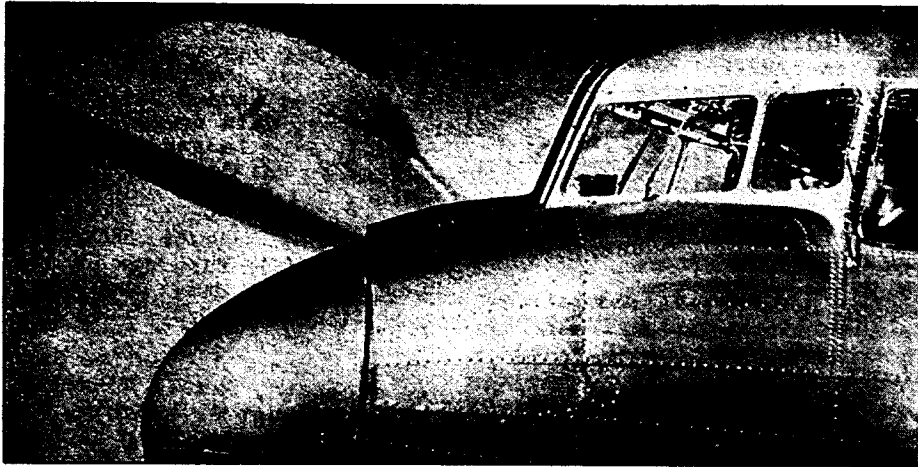
de *Rollright* al noroeste de Oxford, sobre el que corren todavía numerosas leyendas. *Rollright Stone* está formado por un *Cromlech* (un círculo de piedra de 31,6 metros de diámetro), un *menhir* a una distancia de se-



*Lamentablemente carecemos de pocos datos objetivos que nos conduzcan a saber con exactitud cuál es la fuente de conocimientos de la que se nutrieron los celtas.*



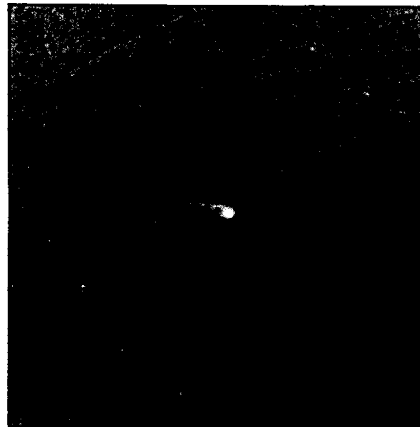
## LA MISTERIOSA OLEADA DE 1896-1897



**L**A eclosión de los platillos volantes y el ocaso de la era geocéntrica se manifestaron el 24 de Junio de 1947, tarde en la que Kenneth Arnold, un hombre de negocios de 32 años, natural de Boise (Idaho), atisbó desde su avioneta nueve objetos brillantes plateados en forma de luna creciente, maniobrando a 1.600 millas por hora en las proximidades del Monte Rainer, Estado de Washington. A partir de esa memorable jornada se sucedieron una tras otra las modernas avalanchas de aeroformas desconocidas, y el mundo tomó conciencia de otras posibles inteligencias planetarias.

Las visitas masivas de vehículos alienígenas no se inauguraron empero con la «serpiente de verano» del 47, sino en las postrimerías del siglo pasado. Durante seis largos meses se precipitó sobre el subcontinente norteamericano la invasión de objetos volantes no identificados más interesante de los anales de la ufología, un increíble drama único en la historia, cuya representación dio comienzo en California en Noviembre de 1896 hasta alcanzar su apoteosis en el Estado de Texas en Abril del siguiente año, para extinguirse un mes después con ocasionales avistamientos canadienses en el verano y otoño de 1897.

El investigador Robert G. Neely, Jr., patrocinado por la «Fund for UFO Research», ha dedicado tres años de estudio a analizar el insólito espectáculo celeste escenificado en el intenso bienio 96-97, en los que consultó 4.935 periódicos locales de fin de siglo, catalogando 2.274 noticias acerca de los extraordinarios ingenios que surcaban los cielos de la Unión, de los cuales 288 corresponden a apariciones de tripulantes de morfología humanoide, y 22 son descriptivas de aparentes desastres o accidentes sufridos por aquellas naves del espacio de las que nunca se ha vuelto a saber.



El inolvidable circo aéreo originó una excitada curiosidad en la sociedad yanqui. La prensa alimentaba la efervescencia popular con innumerables sueltos en torno a «La Aeronave» («The Airship»), que se convirtió en la celebridad nacional acaparando las conversaciones del país.

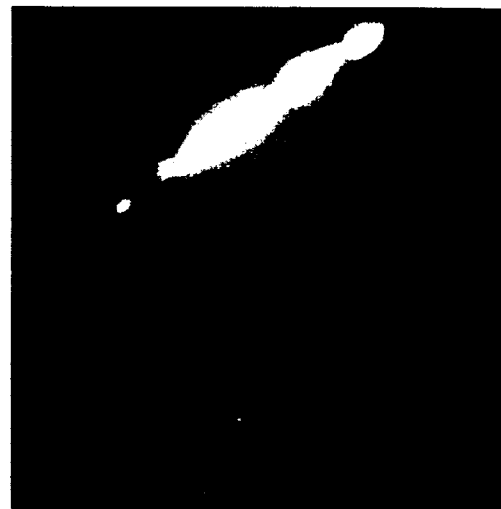
Numerosas máquinas voladoras de muy variado tamaño, aspecto y características montaron un vasto despliegue histriónico en los cielos de la emergente potencia mundial, mostrando destaraladas alas móviles que batían el aire como las de las aves, velas de lona para captar el viento, hélices propulsoras, norias circulares como las de los navíos fluviales, aerostatos de gas, colas estabilizadoras, timones de dirección, máquinas de vapor, motores eléctricos y de gasolina, reflectores, luces multicolores y otros dispositivos mecánicos simulados, susceptibles de ser atribuidos a la primitiva «tecnología punta» en boga a finales del novecientos.

Sus enigmáticos pasajeros se desempeñaron cual magistrales actores interpretando el papel de ordinarios varones de apariencia humana que se expresaban en correcto inglés, bellísimas damas, ancianos, niños y cocineros negros afanados en guisar patos recién cobrados. Volaban acompañados de animales domésti-

cos como perros y hasta una vaca para la que la farándula espacial pidió una alpaca de heno. Se registraron varios casos de fiestas con música, baile y jolgorio en las mansiones del aire, y fueron vistos conocidos lugareños invitados a bordo.

Los ocupantes hacían como que fumaban, cazaban y pescaban y, como cualquier terrícola, se dejaban ver comiendo pan, patatas o pescado asado, e incluso tomaban instantáneas de las asombradas gentes de abajo con cámaras de la conocida marca «Kodak». De los objetos volantes se obtuvieron a su vez varias fotografías que al parecer no se han conservado.

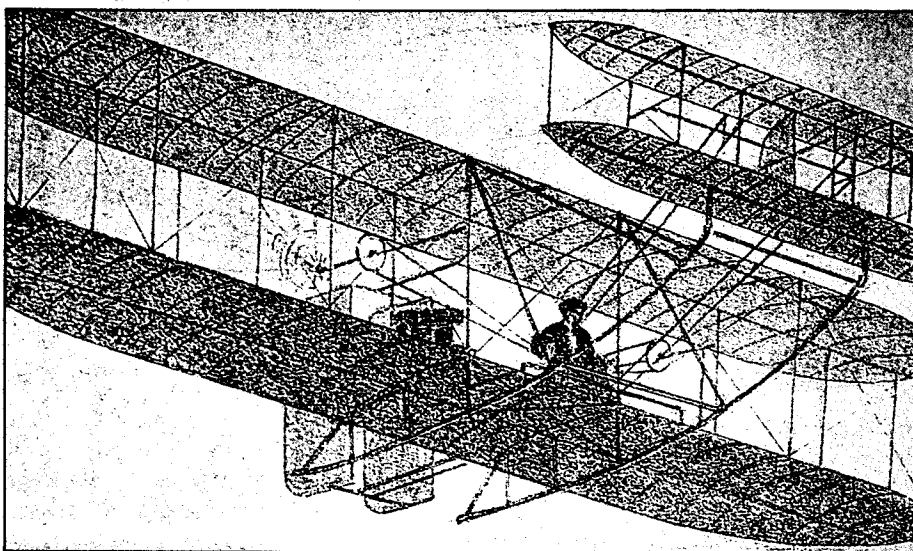
Muchas veces los viajeros aterrizaron para adquirir periódicos, vituallas, útiles y enseres que pagaban religiosamente con dólares de curso legal. Conversaban durante horas con los



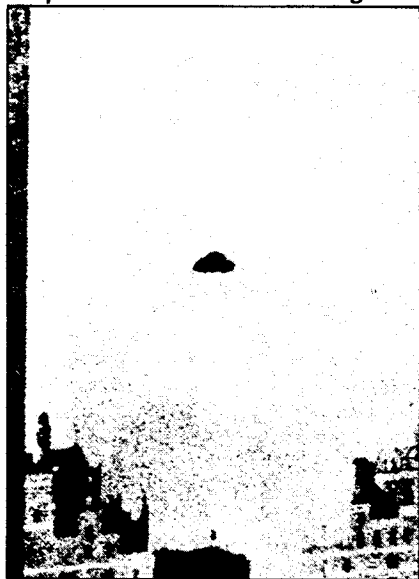
sorprendidos aldeanos, que les acompañaban en pintorescas excursiones de ida y vuelta por la atmósfera, mientras les ponían al tanto del pretendido funcionamiento de los aparatos y de sus sistemas de propulsión, supuestamente a vapor, eléctricos, a gasolina, con flotadores de gas, etcétera. Repostaron grandes cantidades de agua, carbón mineral y aceite para el hipotético abastecimiento de sus dirigibles alados, que parecían averiarse de tanto en tanto y sus mecánicos reparaban y engrasaban a ojos vista. Por otra parte, dejaban caer piezas de desecho de sus instalaciones, objetos diversos, paquetes y cartas dirigidos a ciudadanos prominentes en cada comarca, con lo que demostraron un minucioso conocimiento de la sociedad norteamericana.

En cuanto a su procedencia gustaban pasar por inventores de la patria de Abraham Lincoln en viaje de pruebas, y reforzaban tan falaz coartada confiando a los testigos sus presuntos nombres, apellidos y localización





Aeroplano de los hermanos Wright



geográfica (Nueva York, el Polo Norte, la India, Japón...), anunciando de paso con datos siempre distintos y contradictorios entre sí, que sus naves en experimentación serían presentadas en breve plazo en importantes ferias y exposiciones industriales de la nación, para luego comercializarlos.

Sorprendentemente, los aeronautas contaban con eficaces cómplices en tierra, que en el momento oportuno, recorrían las redacciones de los periódicos sembrando la falsa especie de que «La Aeronave» era una creación de geniales mecánicos en la sombra, que tras ponerla a punto la venderían pronto en el mercado.

Las prestaciones aeronáuticas comprobadas de los «aviones» finiseculares (altísima velocidad, pasmosa capacidad de maniobra, inmovilización en el espacio, funcionamiento silencioso, potente iluminación y otras proezas técnicas) estaban muy por encima del moderado adelanto tecnológico de aquel tiempo (recordemos que el primer vuelo de los hermanos

Wright no se consiguió hasta 1903), lo que pone de manifiesto que de ningún modo se podía tratar de artefactos contruidos en nuestro planeta, y que la abigarrada flota exhibida sobre los Estados Unidos fue en realidad un habilidoso montaje teatral, camuflado con burdos disfraces asaz terrestres atribuibles al desarrollo científico y a los usos y costumbres de la época en esa región del globo.

La simulación histriónica resultó tan meticulosamente orquestada en ostensibles claves terrenales que el país entero se tragó el anzuelo. Nadie advirtió que eran víctimas de un tremendo engaño (¿con qué miras?), y los ciudadanos creyeron estar viendo revolucionarios navíos aéreos ideados por ingenieros excéntricos, sin sospechar que contemplaban una gigantesca superchería perpetrada con ignotos fines por entidades ultraterrestres afincadas en la Tierra.

Como en las clásicas oleadas de la segunda mitad del siglo XX, en 1896/97 la observación de OVNI's se vio también complicada en las mismas zonas por una variada gama de sucesos paranormales: poltergeist, caída de piedras calientes, yetis, animales fantasmas, monstruos marinos, hedores sulfurosos y un largo y complejo etcétera.

¿De qué planeta o plano vibratorio provenían los cosmonautas que fingieron ser toscos descubridores provincianos? ¿Y con qué ocultos propósitos coreografiaron su inexplicable semestre de ballets teatrales en las alturas? Casi un siglo después seguimos tan ignorantes al respecto como los ingenuos espectadores de la guerra de Cuba, con la diferencia de que al fin del milenio sabemos ya distinguir entre la vida real y una artera comedia escenificada por ufonautas de dudosas intenciones.

Ignacio Darnaude



de los objetos como de aproximadamente los 2/3 del tamaño de un avión DC-4.

Arnold observó, igualmente, que se movían de una forma extraña: como dando saltos de arriba abajo. Al describirlo más tarde, usó una frase cuyas consecuencias no podía ni imaginar. Dijo que se movían «como lo haría un plato pequeño (un platillo) si se arrojara a ras de agua».

Sin duda este no fue el avistamiento más importante de su especie y ni siquiera el primero, ni el más cercano, ni el que mejor se observó. No fue corroborado por nadie más, fue distante, poco nítido y muy corto. ¿Por qué fue entonces tan importante?

Su relevancia se manifestó cuando un periodista usó la frase de Arnold de que aquellos objetos se movían «como lo haría un platillo si se tirara a ras de agua». Esta expresión llamó la atención de los medios de comunicación y dio a un fenómeno ya antiguo un nombre que el público podía entender: Platillo Volante. Era el nombre justo para el ambiente de ese momento.

En estas cuatro décadas, este escurridizo fenómeno se ha negado a desaparecer; persiste y va adquiriendo más y más fuerza, escapando por completo al control de un Kenneth Arnold que —inconscientemente— puso en marcha, el mecanismo extraño de los platillos volantes, aun a pesar de que ya hubo antes que él quien bautizara



Más allá de los

# OVNIS

EL RETORNO DE LOS  
DIOSES



Depósito legal: M-7492-92

Capítulo 21, *SEPTIEMBRE 1.992*  
TOMO 3

**MAS ALLA**

Precio: 300 ptas.

1.896 - 97 Voy a describir a continuación una serie de observaciones aparecidas en la prensa de Chicago del año 1.897 y correspondientes a la oleada que se produjo ese año. Tienen en común una serie de curiosas características: Los aparatos parecen de muy poca sofisticación tecnológica y sus ocupantes se dedican a realizar operaciones tan prosaicas como pueden ser bajar a reparar su máquina o ponerse a pescar.

El 12 de abril en Girard (Illinois) un numeroso grupo de mineros vieron aterrizar un objeto desconocido tres kilómetros al norte de Green Ridge y

VM, AÑO 75

1.896-97

4 al sur de Girard. El maquinista nocturno del ferrocarril entre Chicago y Atlanta Paul McCraemer, declaró que se acercó tanto al aparato que vió salir de él a un hombre para reparar la maquinaria. El objeto era alargado como un barco y tenía un doble dosel. Se encontraron huellas en una amplia zona.

El 14 de abril a las tres de la tarde aterrizó un objeto a dos km. al sur de Gas City (Indiana) en la finca del Sr. Johan Roush aterrorizando a los campesinos y provocando una estampida entre los caballos y el ganado. Salieron seis ocupantes de la nave y al parecer se entregaron también a ciertas reparaciones. Antes de que la multitud lograra aproximarse al aparato éste se elevó rápidamente volando hacia el Este.

El 14 de abril, en Cliveland (Ohio) Josephu Singler capitán del Sea Wing, estaba pescando con el Sr. Davis de Detroit, cuando vieron en el lago que les pareció un barco de unos 13 metros de eslora con un dosel, un hombre de unos 25 años con chaqueta de cazador y gorra estaba pescando desde el puente del objeto. A su lado se veían una mujer y un niño de unos 10 años. Al acercarse nuestros testigos al aparato, un enorme globo se elevó del objeto, que a su vez ramorizó el vuelo con él hasta una altura de unos 150 metros y describió varios círculos como los de un halcón antes de alejarse.

Después de estas descripciones no podemos por menos que recordar a nuestro escritor preferido de la infancia, Julio Verne, y a sus fantásticos relatos de aventuras técnicas, y nos ponemos a especular sobre si esta serie de fenómenos fueron los que le inspiraron ó si como diversos autores han pretendido insinuar, pertenecía a alguna sociedad secreta poseedora de conocimientos arcanos que dejaba vislumbrar através de sus novelas.

El 15 de abril en Springfield (Illinois) dos braceros, los señores Winkle y Hunlle, vieron un extraño aparato posado en un campo; conversaron con sus ocupantes que eran una mujer y dos hombres, los cuales les dijeron que la nave había volado de Quiney a Springfield en 30 minutos y que la tripulación estaba efectuando reparaciones eléctricas.

Pero no todas las observaciones de este siglo son tan extraordinariamente curiosas como estas anteriores.

LA EXTRAÑA OLEADA DE 1897

Por Luis R. Gonzalez, del C.E.I.

Los ufólogos tradicionales acostumbran a atacar a la ciencia oficial porque rechaza a los OVNIs debido a lo "anómalo" de sus características. Pero estos mismos ufólogos mantienen idéntica actitud hacia algunos casos "extraños dentro de lo extraño" que, generalmente, desechan en su análisis como fantasiosos (por ejemplo: las expansiones y contracciones de OVNIs, e incluso su desmaterialización; las teleportaciones; las contracciones temporales; los OVNIs que cambian de forma; etc.)

Desgraciadamente para esos investigadores, este tipo de casos van acumulándose, y llega el momento en que es imposible despreciarlos. . . Es curioso como los OVNIs parecen divertirse con nosotros: cuando logramos extraer una teoría sobre ellos que nos permite casi explicar su comportamiento hasta entonces (las ortotenas, el ciclo marciano,

etc.) empiezan a surgir casos y más casos que no siguen estas "leyes": así, ya no se siguen las ortotenas; ni se cumple el ciclo marciano; unas veces la propulsión parece electromagnética, otras iónica, etc.

El ejemplo más claro, y *sobre todo extenso*, de este tipo de observaciones es la Oleada de 1896-97 en el medio Oeste americano. Relataré a continuación algunos casos (no precisamente los más increíbles) que nos faciliten una idea general de lo que allí ocurrió:

12-abr-1897 Girard (Illinois). Un numeroso grupo de mineros vieron aterrizar un objeto. El maquinista nocturno del ferrocarril de Chicago, Paul McCramer, declaró que se acercó tanto al aparato, que vió salir de él a un hombre para reparar la maquinaria. Se encontraron huellas. El objeto era alargado como un barco, tenía techo y un doble dosel.

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un ejemplo de inexactitudes mayores), los que no lo tenemos tendremos que utilizar el del humor.

Hablaba al principio de la necesidad de un nuevo método. Este sería el que se contendría en tres postulados básicos:

- a) Revisar profundamente la validez del camino seguido hasta ahora.
- b) Analizar a la sociedad ufológica como "miembro" del conjunto que constituye el Fenómeno OVNI (y por lo tanto considerar que el asunto OVNI es más extenso que su parte fenoménica).
- c) Abrir nuevos campos de la investigación, tan heterodoxos para la ciencia oficial como heterodoxo es el Fenómeno ante los científicos oficiales.

Estas son las incidencias de un fenómeno,

no, del ser humano sobre el fenómeno, y no del fenómeno sobre el ser humano como hasta ahora sólo se ha venido estudiando. Esta es una auténtica dimensión de la realidad.

Miguel PEYRO GARCIA  
SEVILLA

Fuente de los casos:

- (1) extraído de "1945, Der Fliegende Autobus von Livorno" en UFO-NACHRICHTEN Marzo/Abril de 1976, pág. 8.
- (2) extraído del magnífico informe de Mateos Nogales, Filpo, Alonso y Moya "Extraños seres en Almonaster la Real".
- (3) Nota de prensa del diario "Las Américas" de Florida, enviada por Sergio Cervera (C.I.F.A.).

D-78

Partió hacia el Norte.

14-abr-1897 Cleveland (Ohio). Unos pescadores vieron en el lago lo que les pareció un barco de unos 13m. de largo con un dosel. *Un hombre de unos 25 años con chaqueta de cazador y gorra, estaba pescando desde el puente. A su lado se veían una mujer y un niño de unos 10 años.* Al acercarse, un enorme globo de colores se elevó del objeto, que a su vez se remontó con él hasta una altura de unos 150m. describiendo varios círculos antes de irse.

19-abr-1897 LeRoy (Kansas). Un rico agricultor, Alexander Hamilton, fue despertado por un alboroto entre el ganado y salió al exterior con otras personas. vieron un objeto alargado, en forma de cigarro, de unos 100m. de largo con una cabina transparente en su parte inferior, que mostraba unas estrechas bandas rojizas. El objeto se cernía a unos 10m del suelo. Se aproximaron a menos de 50 m. de él. Estaba iluminado y provisto de un reflector. Dentro del aparato había seis *seres repugnantes* que hablaban un *lenguaje desconocido*. Una becerra fue arrastrada por el objeto con ayuda de un fuerte cable rojo; al día siguiente encontraron la piel en el campo. Se hizo una declaración jurada.

23-abr-1897 McKinney Bayou (Arkansas). El juez Byrne, estaba examinando un terreno cuando vio un objeto extraño anclado en el suelo. "Estaba tripulado por tres hombres que hablaban un idioma extranjero, pero a juzgar por su aspecto se les hubiera tomado por japoneses". Le invitaron a ver la nave y le dijeron que la maquinaria interna estaba hecha de *aluminio*.

Desde un punto de vista meramente estadístico, podría parecer una oleada "normal": cumple las leyes de Vallée y también el ciclo marciano; las características sociológicas de los testigos son también las corrientes (incluso había, por parte de los animales, las mismas reacciones que en la actualidad).

Pero si escarbáramos bajo esta capa superficial aparecen detalles sorprendentes, irracionales. Por ejemplo: la "nave aérea" es —como muchos OVNI's actuales— un objeto en forma de cigarro puro, pero además poseía reflectores, aletas, ruedas giratorias y hasta ¡Un ancla! . Las maniobras son idénticas a las de los OVNI's modernos (inmovilización en el aire, vuelos en círculo, despegues casi instantáneos, etc.) pero al no haber peligro de persecución, iba a una velocidad reducida (entre 15 y 150 millas/hora.)

Por lo que respecta a los medios de propulsión, a pesar de que las descripciones de la "nave aérea" son diferentes entre sí, atienden a las distintas teorías de la época sobre los diseños de los "más pesados que el aire": con forma de dirigible, impulsados por ruedas giratorias, o imitando con grandes alas el vuelo de las aves, etc. Pero estas naves, como sabemos actualmente, es completamente imposible que vuelen. . . ¿o no?

Si preferimos creer en las declaraciones de los tripulantes (según los testigos) las variantes son infinitas: emplean vapor, electricidad, aire condensado, etc.

Es interesante señalar que esta apariencia de estar *ligeramente* por delante de la tecnología terrestre de la época, es una constante del fenómeno OVNI. Así, más tarde, en los años 30 aparecen en Finlandia los "aviones fantasma" que volaban a través de grandes tormentas; hacia 1947 tenemos los famosos "cohetes" de Suecia; actualmente parecen poseer motores iónicos, atómicos y antigravitatorios. . . ¿qué será después?

Todavía hay cosas más curiosas.

Todos los ocupantes que sostuvieron conversaciones con terrestres no podían distinguirse de la población norteamericana media: con barba, vestidos normalmente (hasta había mujeres y niños) pidiendo permiso para coger agua, e incluso pagando ! con moneda legal! algunos favores.

En cambio, los ocupantes de la nave aérea vistos desde lejos, parecían "seres repugnantes" y se comportaban más. . . "normalmente", robando becerros, etc. ¿Tratarían de no asustar a la gente, adoptando, de alguna forma, apariencia humana?

Al igual que los OVNI actuales, la nave aérea parece tener una gran preocupación por demostrar su existencia, pero como ellos, tampoco aterriza en las grandes ciudades. Sin embargo, en esta ocasión el proceso es llevado hasta sus últimas consecuencias: se hacen pasar por norteamericanos, llegando a captar el sentir del país y declarando que usarían su máquina para volar a Cuba y echar a los españoles. Sus explicaciones eran lógicas para los colonos de entonces. Ahora ya no lo son tanto: "mi nombre no viene al caso, llameme Smith (. . .) es posible que otro día vengamos a buscarle y le llevemos a dar una vuelta en nuestra nave para agradecerle su amabilidad (. . .) Soy de cualquier sitio, pero estaremos en Grecia pasado mañana"; "le dijeron que cinco de aquellas naves estaban siendo construidas en Iowa, y que el invento pronto se haría público. Se estaba constituyendo una inmensa compañía de acciones y antes de un año estas máquinas serían de uso general. . . "terminaremos el viaje en Nashville (Tennessee) después de recorrer todo el país"; "venimos de una región libre de hielos, en el Polo Norte".

¿Qué quiere decir todo esto? ¿Trataban quizá de acostumbrar a la gente a verlos, haciendo naves parecidas a los dirigibles para que luego nadie se extrañase aunque las naves fueran distintas? Esta hipótesis explicaría que pidieran permiso para coger agua, en vez de hacerlo en cualquier lago; o que se pusieran a reparar la nave cerca de testigos; o porque, aun siendo idénticos a la población media, no compraban directamente los objetos que querían, prefiriendo encargárselos a alguien.

Puede que al mismo tiempo buscasen confundir a los futuros investigadores, dejando caer notas ocasionales, diciendo a los testigos cosas ridículas, que, globalmente y desde una perspectiva posterior en el tiempo, desacreditaran a los testigos, y de paso a todo el misterio. Como decía Aime Michel: "si el contacto se evita, y se evita, la mejor manera de obstaculizar y desorientar a los investigadores consistiría en efectuar contactos absurdos."

Un elemento inquietante a añadir, son dos pequeñas novelas de un conocido escritor francés: las obras se titulan "Robur el Conquistador" y "El Amo del Mundo" y su autor es Julio Verne. En estas dos novelas, escritas antes de 1896, Verne describe un aparato similar a la nave aérea, cuyo comportamiento nos recuerda mucho lo ocurrido durante la Oleada. ¿Una nueva "profecía" de este gran escritor?

Años más tarde, en 1909, la nave aérea volvió a aparecer, aunque en esta ocasión fue en el Este de los EE.UU. y en menos ocasiones. Esta oleada siguió las mismas características de la anterior, pero sin ningún aterrizaje. Parece que la nueva nave aérea fue observada también en Inglaterra y Nueva Zelanda.

La oleada de 1896 ocurrió hace bastante tiempo, pero la "desacreditación cosmi-ca" que parece subyace en la misma, continúa todavía. Siguen haciendo declaraciones falsas a los testigos, a juzgar por los contactos "mesiánicos" que últimamente proliferan. Algunos de los casos recopilados por Vallee en su catálogo "Magonia" no tienen nada que envidiar a los de la Oleada de 1897:

4-oct-1954 Chaleix (Francia). Un agricultor vio aterrizar en su campo un objeto del tamaño de un carro. Dos hombres de estatura normal salieron de él por una puerta corredera. Vestían monos de color caqui y eran de tipo europeo. Estrecharon la mano del testigo y dijeron algo así como "¿París? ¿Al



Norte? ". Acariciaron el perro del testigo y luego el aparato partió a una velocidad impresionante.

12-oct-1954 Sainte-Marie d'Herblay (Francia). Gilbert Lelay, de trece años vio un cilindro fosforescente en un prado y junto a él a un hombre vestido con traje gris y botas y sombrero igualmente grises. Sostenía una esfera centelleante y dijo a Gilbert, en francés, que no la tocara. Luego se metió en el aparato, que se alejó describiendo bucles hasta desaparecer.

20-oct-1954 Raon-l'Étape (Francia). Lázlo Ujvari, de 40 años, se encontró de pronto con un hombre que vestía chaqueta, botas y un casco de piloto, de tela, que le apuntó con una pistola diciéndole algo que no entendió. Cuando Ujvari se le dirigió en ruso, el desconocido le respondió en el mismo idioma, le preguntó si estaba en España o en Italia y a que distancia se encontraba de Alemania. Cuando le preguntó la hora, Ujvari le dijo que eran las 2:30. El desconocido sacó entonces su reloj y le dijo: "Miente usted; son las 4" Entonces quiso saber a que distancia estaba Marsella. Invitó a Ujvari a seguirlo por la carretera y llegaron frente a un aparato gris rematado por una antena. Ujvari se alejó, y cuando estaba a unos 200m. oyó un suave silbido y vio elevarse el objeto verticalmente.

6-nov-1957 Playa del Rey (California) Varios automovilistas iban junto a la playa, cuando se les pararon los motores. Observaron en la playa un objeto ovoide envuelto en una "neblina azulada". Dos

hombres de estatura menor que la normal salieron del aparato e hicieron diversas preguntas a los testigos acerca de su identidad, que hora era, etc. Tenían aspecto normal, llevaban pantalones negros de cuero, cinturones blancos y jerseys de color claro; su tez parecía tener un tono verde amarillento. Volvieron a su nave, que partió con rapidez, pudiendo entonces ponerse en marcha los automoviles.

23-mar-1966 Temple (Oklahoma). Un técnico en electrónica que se dirigía automovil a una base aérea donde prestaba sus servicios, encontró en la carretera un objeto que le cerraba el paso. Tenía forma de fuselaje de avión, de 25m. de largo; descansaba sobre cuatro patas y tenía luces brillantes. En un lado del objeto vio una puerta y una escalerilla corta y un hombre vestido con mono parecía estar inspeccionando el aparato, que ostentaba la identificación "TL 4768". Cuando el testigo se aproximó, el "piloto" entró en el aparato, se oyó un ruido parecido al de una rápida perforadora, y el objeto se elevó. El testigo, a pesar de que estaba familiarizado con todos los tipos corrientes de aviones militares, no pudo ver ningún motor.

Pienso que no se deberían despreciar todos los casos extraños, sólo porque no se enmarquen dentro de nuestros moldes OVNI; sino que deberían ser estudiados, incluso más profundamente que los demás, y finalmente ser aceptados, si son realmente ciertos, con todas sus consecuencias.

Por Luis R. Gonzalez, del C.E.I.

Con el fin de centralizar la correspondencia facilitándonos la labor de recogida, dirija todos sus envíos (incluso los urgentes, voluminosos, certificados, etc.) a, STENDEK-CEI, Apartado de Correos 282 Barcelona.

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OLEADA 1.896-97

OPERACION OVNI (y II)

por Joan Crexell, del CEI

Observemos el Fenómeno OVNI con una visión global de su desarrollo en la época contemporánea. De entrada y a grandes rasgos, se nos ofrece un panorama muy concreto. En efecto, el período moderno de los No Identificados empieza en 1897 en los EEUU, con una Oleada de características muy curiosas. Luego viene un intervalo en el que se suceden esporádicamente algunas observaciones, hasta que en 1946, en los EEUU otra vez, tiene lugar la primera gran Oleada del siglo XX. A partir de entonces, se dan Oleadas y flaps a lo largo y ancho del mundo\*. Así llegamos al año 1974, cuando los EEUU viven las últimas de las manifestaciones masivas del Fenómeno. En estos momentos (1974-?) nos encontramos en una etapa "de espera", en la que siguen dándose casos, pero sin alcanzar el volumen de una Oleada.

Este puede ser el resumen, con una perspectiva histórica, de la casuística OVNI de nuestro tiempo. Empieza y acaba en los Estados Unidos de América y parece que ha terminado la época de las clásicas Oleadas.

**Un plan estudiado**

Pensemos ahora en los problemas que se le plantearían a alguien —repito: no importa ahora quién pueda ser—, que por los motivos que fuese —lo ignoramos— **desea darse a conocer a la humanidad de la Tierra**. Existen dos alternativas: presentarse a la luz del día, en las plazas mayores de las grandes capitales, menospreciando las consecuencias de todo tipo que comportaría este contacto súbito entre dos civilizaciones desiguales, como mínimo, a nivel tecnológico. La otra posibilidad es la de preparar un plan a largo plazo que permita que en el momento del desenlace final —de días, se-

manas... de duración— todo ello sea lo menos traumatizante para nosotros.

Esta preparación de los humanos será activa y pasiva. Activa, de forma que, directa o indirectamente, su presencia continuada vaya modificando nuestra mentalidad acostumbrándola a la realidad de su existencia (primer paso), a la inminencia del contacto (segundo paso) y al contacto (desenlace). Pasiva, gracias a las opiniones de los estudiosos y centros privados de la comunidad científica —o como mínimo de algunos de sus miembros—, etc., quienes interpretan y hacen público que esta presencia es real y que no puede proceder de nuestra civilización. Finalmente, los medios de comunicación social se encargan de divulgar a nivel popular y masivo un conjunto de observaciones y mixtificaciones, con un denominador en común: "algo pasa, alguien ajeno a nosotros está aquí".

Como veremos más adelante, los OVNI's parecen ceñirse a un plan perfectamente estudiado que llamaremos "Operación OVNI". Del mismo modo, con esta perspectiva, su comportamiento, calificado de absurdo por muchos, deja de serlo para adquirir la cualidad de seguir unas determinadas pautas que podemos llegar a conocer\*\*.

**La puesta en práctica**

La puesta en práctica de este plan requiere buenas dosis de psicología social, aplicada a nivel mundial. La primera etapa a cubrir es la de demostrar la realidad de su existencia como algo que no tiene sus raíces en nuestra civilización. Dicho en otras palabras, el primer paso consiste en la introducción de un nuevo "producto-idea" en la mentalidad y en la vida diaria de las gentes de la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Para ello nos valdremos de las

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modernas técnicas publicitarias para el convencimiento de las masas. El quid fundamental de esta primera parte de la Operación es llamar nuestra atención.

Cualquier manual de publicidad nos enseña que lo más importante en una campaña publicitaria es conseguir llamar la atención del futuro cliente, votante, etc. O sea, que el nuevo producto o la nueva idea que se pone en circulación no pase desapercibido, no se confunda con otro..., sino que al contrario, contenga uno o más elementos que lo hagan distinto, diferente, inconfundible, etc., de todos los demás. Pero al mismo tiempo, el producto o la idea que se ofrece a las masas, no debe resultar demasiado extraño: diferente sí, innovador también, pero jamás radicalmente vanguardista o minoritario, a excepción de que la situación lo requiera. En el primer estadio de la Operación OVNI se trata de introducir una idea —estamos ahí y no somos de aquí—, asociada a una imagen —una nave de características no usuales—, transcrita en una palabra —OVNI— que puedan ser asimiladas por millones de personas pacíficamente y con naturalidad.

Es evidente que para buena parte de la humanidad, el Fenómeno OVNI es algo que llama la atención. En efecto, una observación fiable: de aterrizaje o cuasi-aterrizaje o bien con efectos fisiológicos, o con huellas materiales, o detectada por radar..., deja una fuerte impresión en el sujeto, testigo eventual, quien siente atraída su curiosidad por algo que le llama la atención. ¿Y por qué le llama la atención?

Dicen las modernas técnicas publicitarias que en nuestra civilización tecnológica, el modelo más perfecto es precisamente una imagen. Pero no una imagen cualquiera: "real" —no a base de dibujos—, en movimiento, en colores intensos, con fuerte contraste en relación con lo que la rodea, con luces cambiantes, con un comportamiento atrayente, etc. ¿Se adaptan los OVNI a estas premisas? Yo diría que sí y que lo hacen a las mil maravillas. Pues el hecho de presentarse de noche no es porque no les interesamos, sino porque el marco visual —fondo ne-

gro— es óptimo para que se les pueda ver, ya que de día normalmente es más difícil detectarlos. Lo mismo diremos de las lucecitas de colores: ¿sirven realmente para algo más que para captar nuestra atención? Y qué decir de su comportamiento "absurdo" para algunos... ¿No será más bien que ejecutan ciertas evoluciones para que nos demos cuenta de que no se trata de helicópteros, aviones... y sí de algo no construido por nosotros? ¿Y los ocupantes? Salen, entran, recogen piedras... dan una vuelta, etc. Gracias a este comportamiento tan "extraño", sabemos que las naves "pertenecen" a alguien que y no son sondas vacías.

#### Disfrazarse o adaptarse al medio

Una cosa es evidente: todo lo que hacen no es porque sí, para pasar el rato tomándonos el pelo. No, nos están mostrando que existen, que están aquí, y, gracias a sus especiales características propias, nos permiten llegar a la conclusión de que no nos hallamos ante un fenómeno desconocido de la naturaleza —me refiero a las observaciones no explicadas— ni ante un arma secreta de las superpotencias.

Un ejemplo nos ayudará a comprender mejor: los ufonautas. Imaginemos por un momento que jamás, en ningún caso fiable, nadie hubiera reportado la presencia de ocupantes. Ello podría significar que se trata de naves automáticas, que sus conductores prefieren no darse a conocer, etc. Tal comportamiento no sería absurdo, sino más bien misterioso y en definitiva incompleto y raro, porque es de suponer que quien ha sido capaz de construir estas naves, también puede diseñar unas escafandras protectoras que les permitan salir a nuestro exterior. O sea, que no es una casualidad que los testigos denuncien haber visto ufonautas deambulando en las cercanías de un OVNI, sino que ellos se dejan ver a posta, intencionadamente. Y lo más lógico es asociarlos a estos aparatos, sea como sus conductores, como sus constructores, o como animales de carga; esto está por demostrar. Lo importante es que ellos quie-

ren que les veamos. Otra cosa es que sean realmente como los vemos, como se nos muestran.

Me refería al principio a la Oleada americana de 1897, calificándola de "muy curiosa". En efecto, ello es así porque la más elemental lógica nos dice que aquellas naves (ver dibujo adjunto) no podían volar o, mejor dicho, sí que podían y que todo el aparato exterior era un adorno inútil para facilitar su desplazamiento por nuestra atmosfera, pero en cambio muy útil de cara a los testigos: "humanizaban" sus naves de acuerdo con la época —principio de la aviación— y se presentaban siempre de día, pues era de sentido común que los arriesgados experimentos aéreos se hacían a la luz del sol y no en la obscuridad de la noche. Gracias a haberse presentado así, como seres humanos —no como humanoides—, con unos aparatos que poco o mucho podrían haber tenido relación con el rumor popular de que "hay quien quiere volar con máquinas", mayoritariamente de día para no infundir sospechas o miedo, que la Oleada de 1897 pasó a la historia —nuestro Diario de Barcelona habló del tema—, porque aquellas gentes no se encontraron nada excesivamente raro asociable a espíritus, fantasmas, ángeles, demonios, etc. Era algo creíble, aunque discutible entre partidarios y no partidarios de si es posible volar con máquinas.

Ahora bien, ¿por qué en 1897?, ¿por qué en EEUU y sólo en EEUU? Estas preguntas nos plantean otra: ¿qué había o tenían los Estados Unidos en 1897 que no tuvieran otros países? Por aquel entonces, los EEUU eran ya la primera potencia industrial del mundo y su red de comunicaciones era cualitativa y cuantitativamente superior a la de los otros países. Si la Oleada del 97 se hubiera producido por ejemplo en Albania, difícilmente hoy sabríamos de su existencia.

Lo que ocurrió entonces, ¿puede aplicarse a las observaciones posteriores? En otras palabras: ¿cómo explicar tal variedad de formas en las naves y tal multiplicidad en los tipos de ocupantes? Una primera aproximación que explicaría sólo

en parte esta proliferación sin sentido es ya conocida: un mismo objeto puede ser descrito a grandes rasgos de forma diferente por varios testigos en una observación de pocos minutos de duración. Pero, además, no sería de extrañar que ellos sigan disfrazando sus naves a un nivel acorde con nuestra actual civilización tecnológica, aunque con unas características más sofisticadas, en el sentido de estar algo más adelantados. En lo referente a los ufonautas, es mi opinión que por algún motivo se disfrazan dando la impresión de que se trata de múltiples razas o humanidades.

Tanto lo uno —naves— como lo otro —ocupantes— responde a una intención. ¿Despistarnos? ¿Dificultar nuestra comprensión del Fenómeno? ¿O quizás para dar la sensación de ser más de los que realmente son? Yo, personalmente, me inclinaría por esta segunda hipótesis, pues es de lógica aplastante que nuestros incógnitos visitantes no han venido por millares, sino más bien en número reducido. Pero hay más: al adoptar diversas formas parahumanas, acrecientan el interés nuestro por ellos, en el sentido de que los testigos ocasionales se dan cuenta perfectamente de que lo observado no tiene nada que ver con la Tierra; dicho en otras palabras, después de un caso de humanoides, no hay ninguna duda de que no son de aquí. Entonces, de ser cierto que se disfrazan, nos preguntamos: ¿cuál es su aspecto verdadero? ¿Humano, casi humano, etc.? Según su primera aparición en masa de la época contemporánea —Oleada de 1897—, diremos que o son como nosotros o se disfrazan para parecerlo. ¿Por qué, pues, a partir de los años cuarenta se presentan también bajo otras formas? ¿Para corroborar la idea general de que los "marcianos" no pueden ser idénticos a nosotros? De ser ello cierto, denotaría que los ufonautas nos conocen la mar de bien al adoptar un disfraz que saben será creíble por nuestra parte. Ello tendría su razón de ser si nos referimos a las posibles observaciones OVNI a lo largo de la Historia, al interpretar leyendas, mitos, tradiciones, religiones, etc. Parece como si siem-

pre hubiesen estado con nosotros, esporádicamente unas temporadas y masivamente —interviniendo como dioses, ángeles, etc.— en épocas muy concretas. Sea quien sea el que esté detrás de la Operación OVNI, la verdad es que nos lleva x años de adelanto tecnológico como mínimo. A pesar de ello, tanto sus naves como sus escafandras, etc. son demasiado humanizadas. ¿Nos imaginamos al hombre del 2.980 o del 3.980 viajando en aparatos como los OVNI's o, por el contrario, en algo aún más incomprendible y maravilloso? Por otro lado, cabe preguntarse: ¿dónde viven y dónde construyen sus naves y demás utensilios? ¿Aquí? ¿En la Luna? ¿En Marte? ¿En otro sistema solar? ¿En otra dimensión? ¿En el futuro, en el pasado? No hay respuesta fiable a estas cuestiones, aunque para el conocimiento de la Operación OVNI a pesar de ser importante son secundarias.

#### El por qué de las Oleadas

Cualquier lector se habrá dado cuenta de que la publicidad comercial de un producto x sufre altibajos a lo largo de un año. En efecto, como se habrá observado, hay temporadas en las que apenas se anuncia y de pronto nos lo encontramos en todas partes, a veces con el epíteto de "nuevo" que en más de una ocasión esconde un simple cambio de envase adaptado a los colores de moda. Al cabo de un tiempo, tal producto vuelve al estado de semiolvido a nivel de propaganda. Las empresas publicitarias importantes, por ejemplo las de los productos de difusión y consumo mundial, saben muy bien lo que se hacen y por qué lo hacen. Con ello quiero decir que estos incrementos de publicidad no son aleatorios, sino que perfectamente estudiados, preparados y programados, bajo el lema general de "repetición, novedad y originalidad".

En el Fenómeno OVNI, estos incrementos de publicidad o saturación —apariciones en masa cada x (variable) tiempo, es lo que se ha venido en llamar Oleadas. Las Oleadas han permitido que millones de personas se enteren de lo que es un

OVNI. En efecto, en el período comprendido entre las dos primeras Oleadas conocidas de la época contemporánea, 1897 y 1946, y a pesar de darse alguna observación esporádica, ¿quién hablaba de "platillos volantes", OVNI's, "marcianos"...? Nadie o casi nadie. Sin embargo, a partir de 1946 y en especial después de la Oleada de 1954 en Francia, en la que los humanoides se presentaron también en muchos aterrizajes, el tema tomó otro rumbo, tanto a nivel de estudiosos como a nivel de gente de la calle.

Como decía más arriba, nada pasa porque sí. Si ellos casi no se dejaban ver entre 1897 y 1946, ¿por qué de pronto empezaron las Oleadas? ¿Porque se aburrían y querían jugar con nosotros? Absurdo! Yo diría más bien porque empezaba una nueva etapa de su plan: el de darse a conocer al gran público y, qué mejor que las apariciones en masa? ¿Entonces, por qué a partir de 1946 y otra vez en EEUU? ¿Porque este país poseía la bomba atómica, porque era el más poderoso del mundo, porque...? Quizás por esto o por aquello, pero lo importante es que han conseguido su objetivo: los OVNI's forman ya parte de nuestras vidas, al igual que muchas otras cosas que aunque no tangibles por todos y cada uno de nosotros, se han convertido en algo normal que ya no nos asombra.

#### Fin de la primera fase

Si es verdad que en 1974 terminó la primera fase de la Operación OVNI, ahora nos hallamos en un período de transición, a la espera de un relanzamiento del Fenómeno. Lógicamente, esta segunda etapa debería ser algo distinta de la anterior, caracterizada por las clásicas Oleadas. Es posible que las Oleadas se repitan, aunque no sería de extrañar que los contactos —no los contactees de "profesores" y visionarios— se multipliquen. Sea como sea, tarde o temprano el Fenómeno OVNI se manifestará nuevamente dando un paso adelante que les acerque a su objetivo final: el contacto abierto y general.

(pása a la pág.44)



# NAVE VOLADORA SOBRE TEXAS EN 1897

Dic- 1979

Los investigadores del fenómeno OVNI saben muy bien que a fines del siglo pasado se desató una especie de oleada de avistamientos y que miles de personas en todo el mundo, especialmente en Estados Unidos, fueron testigos de la presencia de naves extraterrestres. El protagonista de tanto alboroto fue una nave misteriosa que se mostraba en los cielos, por lo general en horas de la noche.

Los pormenores de estos hechos fueron muy difundidos, aunque como es lógico, muchos detalles no tuvieron demasiada repercusión, ya que fueron publicados en revistas y diarios locales.

El escueto relato de este avistamiento apareció el 28 de abril de 1897 en el Houston Post. Lo interesante del caso es que el "ancla" de la extraña nave aérea quedó atorada en una línea férrea.

No es la primera vez que se tiene noticia de algo semejante. En 1207, en plena Edad Media, ocurrió un hecho similar. Fue registrado años después por Gervasio de Tilbury en su libro *Otto Imperialia*. En esa oportunidad el humanoide involucrado fue muerto por los testigos y el ancla fue guardada por el sacerdote local y luego convertida en reja ornamental para la iglesia.

Antes aún, en el año 956, sucedió algo parecido en Irlanda. El relato está contenido en un viejo libro, el *Speculum Regali*.

Pero veamos la nota del Houston Post:



La oleada de 1897 fue rica en incidentes con humanoides, de los que muchas personas fueron testigos.

"Merkel, Texas, 26 de abril. Anoche, al regresar de la iglesia, algunos feligreses notaron un objeto pesado que se desplazaba arrastrando una cuerda. Lo siguieron hasta que al cruzar la línea del tren quedó atrapado en uno de los rieles.

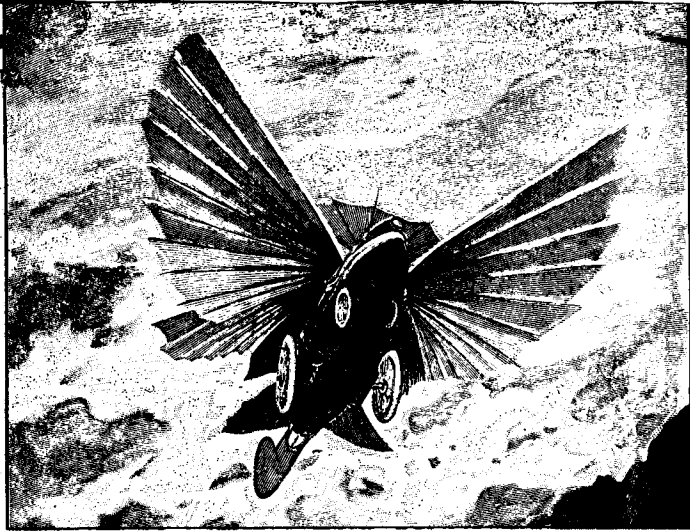
"Al mirar hacia el cielo captaron la presencia de algo que se supone era una nave espacial.

"Estaba demasiado lejos como para hacerse una idea exacta de sus dimensiones. Una luz salía de cada una de las ventanillas, en tanto que en la parte frontal había un faro como los que llevan las locomotoras.

"Después de unos diez minutos se vio descender un hombre por la cuerda, quien se acercó lo suficiente como para que pudiera verse con toda claridad.

"Vestía un traje de marinero de un color azul radiante y era pequeño de estatura. Al ver que había gente junto al ancla se detuvo, cortó la cuerda debajo de él y emprendió la retirada en dirección noroeste.

"El ancla se encuentra ahora en exhibición en la herrería de Ellic y Miller y atrae la atención de cientos de personas".



1.896-97

EL ARTEFACTO

RUDOLPH G. AICARD PANICO EN

LAS EXTR

DE MR

**Y**o soy el exsenador Hart —dijo el ranchero con decisión, echando atrás su sombrero de ala ancha—. Me gustaría saber quién es usted y qué condenada cosa es esa —agregó con rigor.

El recién llegado sonrió. Casi tímidamente y con una voz muy suave, le respondió:

—Soy Wilson. . . El señor Henry Wilson. . .

—Un norteño, un condenado yanqui, supongo —insistió Hart—. Conocí a muchos como usted cuando era senador por el Estado y de vez en cuando debía viajar a Washington para obtener buenos precios para los endemoniados granjeros que eran mis electores.

—Oh, sí. . . Soy norteño. . .

—Bueno, amigo, no lo tome tan a la tremenda. . . Hay cosas mucho peores que esa. . . Sin embargo, no ha contestado a mi pregunta.

—¿Cuál?

—¡Diablos!, no se haga el bobo. . . Quiero saber qué cosa es esa en que usted viaja. . . Yo diría que es una máquina voladora de las que hablan los periódicos. Un invento del demonio, sin lugar a dudas.

—No, señor. . . es un producto legítimo del genio de América. . . Una nave que no va por el mar sino por el aire. Una máquina que vuela. La estamos probando para ir a Cuba a matar españoles. . .

—¡Bravo muchacho!, eso sí que está bien. . . No debe quedar uno solo de esos condenados españoles de piel oscura. . . Y, ¿con qué piensa matarlos? . . . ¿De la impresión tal vez? . . . Mire que su armatoste asusta.

—No, señor Hart. . . Tenemos una buena ametralladora Hotchkiss

a bordo. . . Supongo que las conoce. . .

El relato aparecido en el hoy extinto periódico *Las Noticias Modernas*, de Harrisburg, asegura que el misterioso Wilson ofreció al exsenador Hart un pequeño paseo en su navío, para convencerlo que no era un invento demoníaco, mas el ranchero y político rehusó en forma cortés pero firme. Sólo pidió que lo tuvieran informado sobre el número de españoles muertos en los futuros vuelos sobre Cuba.

#### LAS APARICIONES SE SUCEDEN POR TODAS PARTES

Pocos días después, varios respetables ciudadanos de Chattanooga, Tennessee, informaron haberse topado inadvertidamente con una extraña máquina posada a los pies de un monte, cerca de la mencionada localidad. Dos hombres estaban trabajando en ella, uno de los cuales explicó que se habían visto obligados a aterrizar allí, debido a una falla mecánica. Este hombre, que parecía absolutamente normal y cuyo aspecto no llamó la atención a ninguno de los testigos, sostuvo que era el profesor Charles Davidson y agregó que había salido hacía un mes de Sacramento y que desde entonces estaba volando por todo el país.

En Stephenville, Texas, algunos de los más prominentes vecinos, incluyendo a un juez, un senador estatal y un fiscal de distrito, vieron una máquina voladora, cuyos ocupantes parecían estar haciendo reparaciones. Uno de ellos se presentó como S.E. Tilman y no tardó en ser secundado por otro joven





**DOR QUE SEMBRO**

**GLO PASADO: 1.897**

# AS VISITAS NILSON

Por RUDOLPH G. AICARDI

Cuando indios y bisontes se extinguieron en el lejano oeste de Estados Unidos, apareció un extraño artefacto volador. Miles de vecinos respetables en numerosos pueblos y ciudades lo vieron y hasta llegaron a hablar con sus tripulantes. Uno de ellos dijo llamarse Wilson y ser un inventor genial. . . Esta explicación fue aceptada en su tiempo; sin embargo, parece haber evidencias suficientes para suponer que se trataba de una visita del espacio o, como han sugerido algunos investigadores, de un fenómeno parafísico.



sonriente que dijo llamarse A.E. Dolbear. Ambos rogaron a los extraños notables del pueblo: "Por favor, no se acerquen a esta máquina, porque aún es un secreto. Hay varios importantes capitalistas de Nueva York financiando este proyecto que en pocos años permitirá que el hombre se transporte fácilmente por los aires. . . Pero, por el momento, no hay que decir nada". Luego, ambos subieron a bordo del aparato y haciendo un saludo de adiós, despegaron ante los asombrados ojos de la pequeña multitud allí reunida.

¿Objetos voladores no identificados en los últimos años del siglo pasado, recorriendo de punta a punta los Estados Unidos? Así lo indican cientos de recortes de periódicos de los años 1896-97. ¿Qué eran? ¿Acaso el trabajo de un desconocido inventor o el producto de una tecnología extraterrestre? Hasta hoy no hay respuesta. Pero, los OVNIS ya eran una visión más o menos cotidiana en los mejores años de la *Belle Epoque*. \*

Es una creencia generalizada que los Objetos Voladores No Identificados hicieron su aparición en nuestro planeta en los días posteriores al término de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Nada más lejos de la verdad. El extraño fenómeno es tan viejo como la historia humana.

## LA OLEADA 1896-1897

La censura ejercida con tanto celo por el gobierno norteamericano, ha impedido que se divulgue una serie de desconcertantes hechos

\* *Belle Epoque*: nombre con que ha sido bautizado el periodo de fines de siglo.

ocurridos entre 1896 y 1897, cuando quedaba atrás la epopeya de sangre, codicia y progreso que significó "la conquista del Lejano Oeste" y cuando el país del norte se deslizaba inconscientemente hacia la *Belle Epoque*. Mientras en París se maravillaban con los aerostatos, en Estados Unidos el ingeniero Otto Lillienthal intentaba volar, deslizándose por las laderas de una colina, dotado de alas. Otro ingeniero, el alemán Adler no confiaba en los planeadores de Lillienthal y, menos aún, en los globos rígidos dirigibles que se habían experimentado por primera vez en Francia en 1852. Adler buscaba la forma de hacer a su extraño avión surcar los aires: una especie de ataúd vertical con alas de águila y dos gigantescas y rudimentarias hélices. En Viena, los valeses de Strauss causaban furor y en Estados Unidos, miles de personas vieron aparatos voladores en los cielos de Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Dakota del Sur, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia Occidental y Wisconsin. Los periódicos de estos lugares entrevistaron a los testigos oculares, con lujo de detalles.

## LA OPINION DE EDISON

Los primeros OVNIS —en aquel tiempo nadie soñaba con darles nombre alguno—, fueron avistados en California en noviembre de 1896 y se les vio profusamente en 1897, desde comienzos de enero hasta mediados de marzo. "Todo es puro cuento —dijo en abril de este último año Edison, el genial inventor—.

No tengo la menor duda de que se construirán naves aéreas en el futuro. Pero, creer que ya las hay y que se ha logrado mantenerlas en secreto, es ingenuo. Cuando niños inflábamos con gas globos de papel que flotaban días y días. En esta oportunidad alguien nos está jugando una broma con ellos. . . Sin embargo, si alguien logra construir una nave aérea no tendrá jamás la forma de un globo. Será un ingenio mecánico que se elevará gracias al poderío de su motor, un motor tan liviano como hoy no lo podemos imaginar. Yo, por el momento, no estoy interesado en los aeroplanos. Me interesan los inventos con valor comercial, porque en el mejor de los casos, las máquinas voladoras no pasarán de ser juguetes."

La brillante mente de Edison fue cegada por su avaricia. Estuvo en lo cierto al pronosticar que los dirigibles no tenían futuro, pero se equivocó con el futuro de la aviación. Seis años después de sus declaraciones, en 1903 se celebró el primer "cross-country" de globos rígidos dirigidos, los que cubrieron 98.14 kilómetros. En 1904, el primer dirigible norteamericano hizo sus vuelos de prueba. Era el *California Arrow*, de Thomas Scott Baldwin, que voló durante todo el mes de agosto. Pero, los días de los aparatos de su especie estaban contados. Un año antes, en Kitty Hawk, los hermanos Orville y Wilbur Wright se habían remontado por los aires en una máquina más pesada que el aire.

Pero, volvamos atrás. Edison hablaba de dirigibles, porque la mayor parte de los testigos norteamericanos de la aparición de la nave de mister Wilson, le atribuyeron a ésta la forma de "un cigarro-puro", con grandes hélices, algo similar a los dibujos y daguerrotipos provenientes de Europa, especialmente de los hangares del conde alemán Von Zepelin, que publicaban las páginas de ciencia de los periódicos.

Las declaraciones de Edison, que ya gozaba de una enorme popularidad y de una gran reputación como científico, echaron un balde de agua fría a todos los que se habían entusiasmado con la extraña visión. Para millones de personas, la palabra de quien había hecho

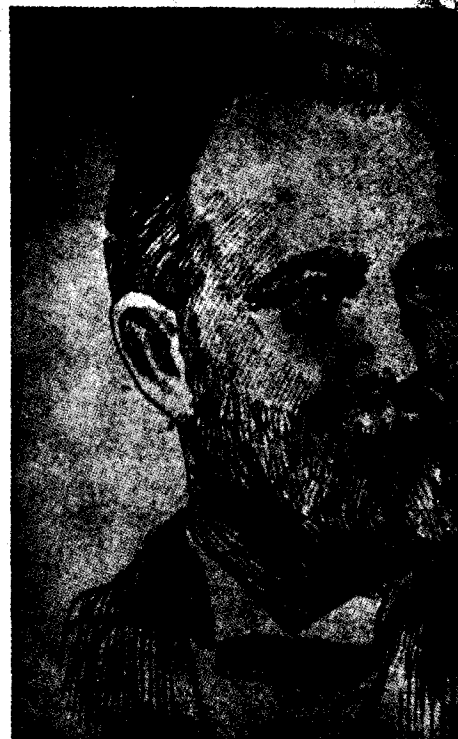
realidad el fonógrafo y la luz eléctrica, era un indiscutible artículo de fe. Pero, pese a Edison, los reportes de la máquina voladora continuaron multiplicándose.

### LAS DISTINTAS VERSIONES

Los tripulantes de estos navíos espaciales no tuvieron inconveniente en dejarse ver por seres humanos, e incluso mantuvieron animadas charlas con algunos de los testigos. Uno de los visitantes se presentó como "mister Wilson", por lo menos en cuatro oportunidades.

Muchos de los testigos describen a los artefactos como "puros voladores". Algunos dicen que se trataba de "un dirigible movido por un motor que accionaba una hélice gigantesca". Ello no es raro, porque en aquella época la gran mayoría opinaba que los globos rígidos impulsados por una hélice, serían la solución para "la conquista del aire". En 1903, el vuelo de los hermanos Wright en un aparato "más pesado que el aire" vino a sacar a la humanidad de su error.

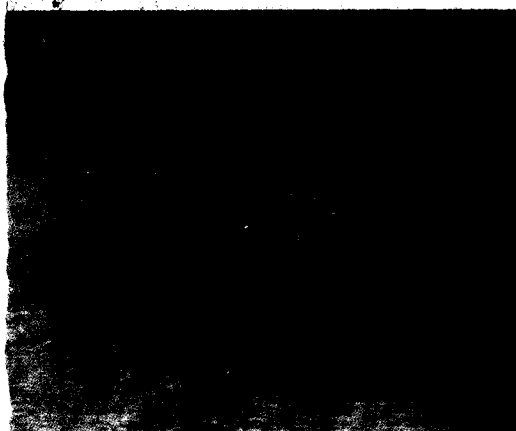
Pese a todo, no hay unanimidad sobre la forma exacta de los "puros voladores" en los relatos recogidos por la prensa de la época. En Omaha, Nebraska, un OVNI interrumpió la ceremonia de iniciación de los Caballeros de Ak-Sar-Ben. Los excitados asistentes dijeron que "una cosa que daba reflejos como si fuese de acero", había pasado por encima de ellos. No faltó quien sostuvo que "su largo era de 12 a 13 pies (4.56 metros) y su ancho de 18 pulgadas (1.50 metros)". El *Chicago Tribune*, del 10 de abril de 1897, informó que alguien vio un artefacto, "de 70 pies de largo (26.60 metros) con cosas que semejabán velas o alas sobre 20 pies (7.60 metros)". En Mount Carroll, Illinois, los vecinos describieron "una cosa como un huevo volador, que parecía tener una luz a su alrededor. No medía más de 10 pies de largo (3.80 metros) y unos tres (1.14 metros) de alto". En Wausau, Wisconsin y Dallas, Texas, lo que se vio fue "un carruaje como un cigarro, con alas o tal vez velas a cada lado de su estruc-



▲ El General W.H.H. Hart, exsenador de California, uno de los principales testigos del aterrizaje de la misteriosa nave.

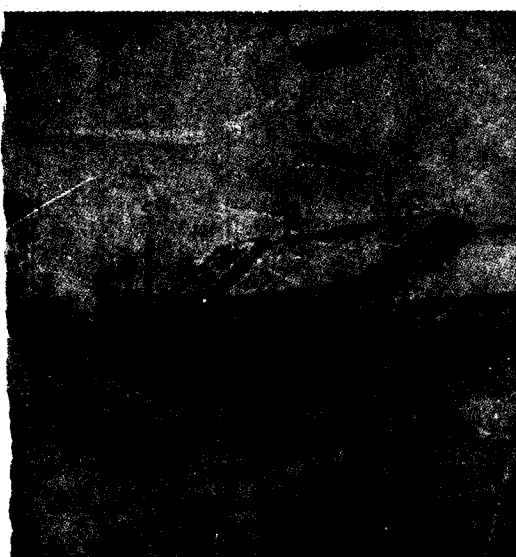
Las apariciones de la nave fueron ridiculizadas continuamente en los periódicos. Aquí vemos una caricatura sobre el tema publicada el 24 de noviembre de 1896. ▼





▲ Un antiguo y por lo mismo borroso documento donde la nave aparece dibujada de acuerdo a la descripción de un testigo. Fue publicado el 23 de noviembre de 1896.

Otro documento similar al anterior publicado seis meses después en Chicago. ▼



tura. Daba la impresión de estar sobre una nube luminosa. . . De las velas se desprendían unas cosas rotatorias, en un ángulo de 45 grados. . . La parte delantera se proyectaba hacia arriba. . . De pronto daba la impresión como si fuese el cuerpo de un pájaro. . .". Los testigos calcularon su extensión en 200 pies (76 metros).

La gente de Fort Worth, Texas, donde aún no se extinguían los ecos de los disparos de los pistoleros, tuvo más imaginación. Ellos juraron haber divisado "algo así como una diligencia, con alas de murciélago en sus cuatro extremos".

### ALGUNAS COINCIDENCIAS CURIOSAS

Todos los casos que fueron pu-

blicados por la prensa norteamericana en esos dos años, indican que hay algunas coincidencias curiosas en el relato de los testigos. Todos señalaron luces de posición —blancas o de color— en los artefactos voladores, además de reflectores de luz roja o blanca "muy intensa". En Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, "la luz blanca adelante, y aquella luz roja atrás, indicaban que se trataba de una máquina, de unos 50 pies de largo (19 metros) y volando a una altura de unos 500 pies (190 metros)". La nave vista en Bahía Benton, Michigan, "tenía luces azules, rojas y verdes". Ocasionalmente los reflectores eran cegadores, como por ejemplo en Everest, Kansas, donde "todo el maravilloso poder de aquellas lámparas fue encendido, llenando de luz a toda la población". Los testigos dijeron que la aparición tuvo lugar a las 9:05 p.m. En Milwaukee, como lo certificaron miles de ansiosos espectadores, "la máquina o lo que fuera" voló directamente hacia el edificio municipal y "sus luces se movían hacia atrás y hacia adelante, como si hicieran señales a quienes estaban en tierra". Frank Dickson, editor del *Progreso de Edna*, en Texas, vio dos de esos objetos voladores "separados por unos 400 pies de distancia (152 metros), los que se comunicaban mediante luces rojas y verdes. Era algo así como un sistema Morse, pero mediante focos que se encendían y se apagaban".

Algunas veces, los movimientos de estos extraños aparatos eran suaves y normales; otras, violentos y erráticos. "La cosa esa se hundió hacia tierra, al norte de la ciudad. De pronto, se elevó derecho hacia el cielo a una gran velocidad y desapareció en la oscuridad de la noche", aseguraron en Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Uno de los detalles más curiosos es el aspecto físico de los tripulantes de los navíos aéreos. Todos los centenares de testigos interrogados estuvieron de acuerdo en que se trataba de hombres comunes y corrientes. Por ningún lado aparece un solo dato que haga sospechar la presencia de "hombrecillos verdes" o algo parecido. Por el contrario, tanto para los testigos como para los periódicos que publicaron sus

historias quedó claro que eran solamente los precursores de la navegación aérea y que se trataba de simples terrícolas.

### ALGO EXTRAÑO EN LOS CIELOS

La avalancha de informes hizo que el profesor Henry S. Pritchett, de la Universidad George Washington de San Luis, escribiera: ". . . algo raro está pasando en nuestros cielos". El astrónomo Arthur C. Lunn, de la Universidad Lawrence, sostuvo que solamente se trataba de la estrella Betelgeuse, de la constelación de Orión. Según Lunn, condiciones atmosféricas especiales permitían crear la ilusión óptica de cambios de color. El profesor G. C. Comstock, del Observatorio Washburn de la Universidad de Wisconsin, estuvo de acuerdo: "Estrellas tan brillantes como Júpiter, Venus y Sirius fácilmente se pueden confundir con un aparato volador ante los ojos de los profanos". El *Chicago Tribune*, destacó a sus mejores reporteros para indagar qué era "lo extraño que ocurre en nuestros cielos", y sus editoriales indicaron que a la luz de los testimonios obtenidos, la teoría de los astrónomos era poco seria. Alguien identificado solamente como "el profesor M.S. Koenig, un especialista en electricidad de Nueva York", amablemente informó que conocía "a un extrabajador de los laboratorios de Edison, quien ha inventado una máquina que logra vencer la ley de gravedad. Yo sé que esta persona vive en San Francisco y que está perfeccionando su aparato volador. Por supuesto —aseguró Koenig— esto suena fantástico, pero es un hecho que una aeronave surca nuestros cielos".

Edison, como ya vimos, sostuvo que todo era "una vulgar patraña". Y el *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* publicó por su parte un editorial asegurando que los testigos sólo habían visto "globos tripulados". Otro editorial sugiere que los espectadores del fenómeno "pueden haber tomado unas copias de más".

*La Estrella*, de Kansas City, aclaró que lo visto no era otra

Continúa en la p. 10

Viene de la pag.

## LAS EXTRAÑAS...

más que Venus, refulgiendo en el cielo, y quienes aseguraban que era "una máquina voladora, tienen más imaginación que conocimientos de astronomía". *La Estrella* fue más lejos: publicó que todo era un ardid de los periódicos de San Francisco, deseosos de aumentar sus ventas y su tiraje, los cuales se habían hecho famosos por sus engaños como el meteoro de Kansas y el viaje del Príncipe de Gales a Estados Unidos, para presenciar el combate de boxeo entre Fitzsimmons y Corbett. *La Tribuna de Chicago*, poéticamente sentenció: "La astronave no es más que un cuerpo celestial al cual se le han atribuido algunas cualidades terrestres, para acomodarlo a las propias limitaciones de la imaginación humana". Más prosaico, un periodista de Omaha sostuvo que todo no era más que un truco publicitario, preparado por una fábrica de puros. Los ciudadanos de Madison, Wisconsin, acusaron a los propietarios de un circo, estacionado cerca de Baraboo, de ser los fabricantes del ingenio. Finalmente, el *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, orgullosamente dijo a sus lectores que un hombre vecindado en Washington había confesado que su *hobby* era capturar pelícanos, en cuyas patas amarraba "linternas japonesas".

La firma Beck's Stove and Range se declaró propietaria del aparato y así lo dio a conocer en anuncios pagados en los periódicos, mientras que en Atlanta la policía hizo público su temor de que se tratara de una banda de ladrones, quienes "con la ayuda de reflectores y rayos X, ubican las mansiones que piensan desvalijar".

Dos detalles llaman la atención en toda esta polémica: primero, que nadie pensó jamás que pudiera tratarse de más de una nave aérea; y segundo, que jamás, como en nuestros días, se sugirió un origen extraterrestre.

## UN ENIGMA QUE SIGUE EN PIE

A partir de 1890 muchas personas en Estados Unidos habían patentado máquinas voladoras y eran muchos los inventores que querían capitalizar fama y fortuna por este medio. El único que voló, realmente, fue el misterioso señor Wilson, quien nunca se presentó en la oficina de patentes. Wilson apareció por primera vez el 19 de abril de 1897 en Beaumont, Texas. Esa vez conversó con el agente viajero John B. Ligon y su hijo Charles y les confió que su navío se movilizaba mediante una fuerza eléctrica. El 20 de abril, Wilson conversó con el comisario H.W. Baylor, de Uvalde, a quien incluso le preguntó por un viejo amigo: el capitán C.C. Akers, exsheriff del condado de Zavalia y empleado de la Aduana en la época del encuentro con Baylor. Wilson dijo que a Akers lo había conocido en Fort Worth en 1877 y que tenía "muchas ganas de verlo nuevamente". Agregó: "Cuando vea al capitán, déle mis saludos".

Un empleado del municipio atestiguó que él había visto "una cosa surcando el aire", a la misma hora que el sheriff Baylor aseguraba que Wilson había virado en dirección a San Angelo. Una semana más tarde, Akers escribió al *Galveston Daily News*, reconociendo haber sido amigo de un hombre llamado Wilson en Fort Worth. "Era un neoyorquino muy educado y tenía 24 años", puntualizó el exsheriff. "Le gustaba mucho la mecánica y decía que trabajaba en la posibilidad de la navegación aérea y que algún día asombraría al mundo", comentó también el mismo oficial. Wilson reapareció en Kountze junto con un hombre que se identificó como Jackson. Luego en Jossierand. Habló con el exsenador Hart y se le vio por última vez en Deadwood. Jamás visitó a su amigo Akers.

La misteriosa nave de la *Belle Epoque*, pronto fue olvidada. En 1903 ya volaban los hermanos Wright. Los maravillosos inventos del novecientos borraron el recuerdo, pero el inquietante enigma, a la luz de lo que ahora sabemos, sigue en pie.

¿Fue realmente un OVNI?

¿Aprovecharon sus tripulantes la carencia de información por parte de los seres humanos, sobre la posibilidad de su procedencia extraterrestre, para mostrarse con toda libertad? Nadie ha proporcionado una respuesta definitiva, aunque sí se han propuesto distintas explicaciones.


## ¿UN MUNDO PARALELO?

La última explicación es la de John A. Keel (ver CONTACTOS No. 20). Para él, la nave que recorrió parte del territorio de Estados Unidos entre 1896 y 1897 puede haber sido no un visitante del espacio exterior, sino de un mundo paralelo al nuestro. Es decir, se trataría de un fenómeno parafísico. Jacques Vallee, el científico francés, apoya esta teoría.

En pocas palabras, ambos manifiestan que los OVNIS son normalmente invisibles por su condición de parafísicos. Según sus hipótesis, serían la creación de un mundo que nos es desconocido, pero que no está ubicado a millones de años luz de distancia, sino, por el contrario, en los propios confines de nuestro mundo físico, inmerso dentro de él. Por tanto, los OVNIS, en determinadas circunstancias son capaces de reflejar la luz, su masa es diáfana y su substancia etérea.

En apoyo a esta teoría, la bibliógrafa Lynn E. Catoe escribió: "La mayor parte de la literatura acerca de los OVNIS está íntimamente ligada al misticismo y a la metafísica. Hay mucho en ella de fenómenos estudiados por la parapsicología, como la telepatía, la escritura automática y las criaturas invisibles".

Keel, por su parte, dice: "Es una historia de aparecidos, fantasmas y extrañas aberraciones mentales; un mundo que nos rodea y que ocasionalmente proporciona pruebas de su existencia; un mundo donde la realidad está distorsionada por fuerzas poderosas que aparentemente pueden manipular el tiempo, el espacio y la propia materia; fuerzas que se encuentran por completo más allá de nuestra capacidad de comprensión".

Inquietante planteamiento el de Keel. Tan inquietante como los propios OVNIS, aunque sean los de 1896. 

# CRONICAS ANTIGUAS DE NAVES EXTRATERRESTRES

1.896-97

**¿FUE JULIO VERNE UN VISIONARIO?, ¿O SENCILLAMENTE - COMO SUS BIOGRAFOS HAN OPINADO- SE DEDICABA A RE-COPILAR NARRACIONES UN TANTO INSOLITAS PARA SU EPOCA? R.O., N° 10, 1993**

**C**ierto o no, debemos considerar que sus obras fueron escritas mucho antes de que el término "platillos voladores" se esparciera por el mundo entero.

Como en la época de Verne aún no se utilizaba el concepto de Objetos Voladores no Identificados, emplean términos tales como "meteoros", "el diablo" o "el rayo" para designar el paso de fenómenos no registrados en su vocabulario.

El interesante libro titulado "Derecho al Polo Sud", contiene dos crónicas de objetos luminosos sobre barcos en altamar.

## ATAQUE DE "UN RAYO" A UN MARINERO

**D**urante diez minutos se agitó a una milla del Vigorous (barco en el que viajaban); después, repentinamente, y habiendo oscilado algunos instantes de derecha a izquierda, como si

En la época de Julio Verne no se conocía el término de 'Objeto Volador No Identificado', sino que se les conocía como 'el diablo', meteoros etc.

estuviera indeciso sobre el camino que había de seguir, pareció tomar deliberadamente una dirección y marchó en línea recta sobre el buque.

"Inquieto por la dirección, y sobre todo por la proximidad de la tromba, el capitán Sheffield un momento antes, había llamado al jefe de la tripulación para darle sus instrucciones. Kasperay se había alejado inmediatamente con dos hombres en dirección del castillo de proa y les había hecho cargar las piezas de artillería que allí estaban montadas.

"Al ver la tromba precipitarse sobre el Vigorous, el capitán dio la señal; Kasperay esperó a que estuviera a 200 metros de distancia y entonces, apoyando el hombro izquierdo y apoderándose con las manos de los volantes apuntó rápidamente a lo alto y mandó hacer fuego.

"Este era el único modo de evitar "el choque del meteoro" y escapar a la catástrofe que parecía ya próxima.

"Los marineros no conocían otros expedientes. Algunos sostienen que de este medio no se puede sacar ventaja práctica alguna.

Sin embargo, cuantos se encuentran en circunstancias iguales se apresuran a recurrir a esta defensa.





La imaginación de Julio Verne era tal, que la nave descrita en el relato "El Dueño del Mundo" tiene una semejanza sorprendente con las que hicieron aparición durante la oleada de 1896-97

El proyectil hizo blanco, por fortuna atravesó la tromba, que se separó en dos segmentos, los cuales se agitaban a uno y otro lado como troncos de serpientes. -Bien apuntado-, exclamó Max Pamfette.

"Algunos momentos después se disipó el fenómeno y la gran nube negra, empezando a caer torrentes de agua.

Durante todo el día no dejó de llover. Un ligero viento soplaba del Norte; contrariado constantemente por cortas y violentas ráfagas, se levantaron furiosamente en todos sentidos sin nada que lo hiciera prever.

"El tiempo se presentaba malo. Para estar preparados a toda eventualidad, el capitán Sheffield hizo afirmar los juanetes y toma dos rizos, sapientísimas precauciones cuya conveniencia él mismo aplaudió, pues aquella noche el Vigorous se encontró en presencia de 'fenómenos metereológicos' intensos y de la misma naturaleza que la tromba de la mañana, seguidos instantáneamente de una verdadera tempestad.

"No eran más que las siete y media, la noche había cerrado por completo y todos se encontraban reunidos en el entrepuente, incluso Simpson y Jackson, cuando repentinamente estalló una formidable detonación parecida

a la que hubiera producido un cañón de 42 centímetros. Al mismo tiempo, el pequeño espacio se llenó de una humareda sofocante con un intenso olor a azufre. Instintivamente los reunidos se separaron y Simpson iba a abrir la puerta para darse cuenta de lo que acababa de ocurrir, cuando llegó Mc Clunny todo emocionado".

-¿Y el doctor?, preguntó con voz que parecía producida por la desesperación.

-¿Qué ocurre?, preguntó el médico precipitándose hacia él.

-¡El rayo!... ¡El rayo! ¡Un hombre!... ¡Sagett!

¡Herido! ¡Casi muerto!

"Sin decir palabra, el doctor Haven se lanzó hacia donde indicaba Mc Clunny.

"El temporal era espantoso. La lluvia había aumentado y caía mezclada con granizo de tamaño de un huevo de paloma. Los relámpagos no cesaban. Por todas partes se sucedían con extraordinaria intensidad acompañados de terroríficos truenos.

-¿Dónde está ese hombre? - preguntó el médico.

-En el sitio de la guardia. Allí le he hecho conducir.

"Gracias al continuo resplandor de los relámpagos veíase como en pleno día ..."

Sin embargo no fue ese el único "avistamiento" que tuvieron a lo largo de la travesía.

Julio Verne en ese mismo libro escribió sobre una espléndida cena en la que había salido a relucir el lienzo que el Heliz contenía. Y el relato dice:

"...Llegado el momento, ocupó cada cual su sitio. Kennedy Smith, muy compuesto y rizado, hizo circular ceremoniosamente entremeses, aceitunas negras y anchoas saladas. El guiso solemne no debía servirse hasta después. Max Pamfette se había reservado el cuidado de llevarle él mismo con gran aparato a la mesa de honor, pero consumidos los entremeses, el pescado no aparecía.

"Dos o tres veces Kennedy Smith entró en la toldilla palmoteó cerca de la escalera para dar la señal del servicio pero fue en vano.

"Aunque llamó con insistencia no obtuvo respuesta alguna y llegó a preguntarse si no convendría deponer toda dignidad y bajar él en persona a la cocina, cuando Max Pamfette llegó por fin. Con el rostro enrojecido, los ojos fuera de las órbitas y el aspecto furibundo; marchaba grandes pasos y llevaba en los brazos, tan extendidos como le era posible una gran marmita humeante; en la cual aú



cocía el guiso tan esperado. Detrás de él venía el grueso Gerfault, no menos encarnado y agitado, tapándose la nariz con el pañuelo.

"A su aparición, los tripulantes no contuvieron el júbilo.

-¡Hurra! - gritaron, ¡hurra! Max Pamfette!

"Pero el marinero, sin prestar atención a estas aclamaciones, se dirigió en línea recta al punto de la barandilla que tenía más próxima y arrojó a la corriente guiso y plato; continente y contenido.

"-¡Zas! ¡A la Garonne! -dijo al mismo tiempo con un tono intraducible de rabia y despecho.

"¡La Garonne!, aquel río subterráneo cuyas negras aguas corrían a diez mil pies bajo la superficie del mar.

"Verdaderamente era preciso que el tolosano se hallase en estado de completa exasperación para sufrir una equivocación semejante. Pero la idea en sí misma era tan graciosa y la cara que puso tan cómica, que ninguno pudo reprimirse y a pesar de la sorpresa y el chasco general, una explosión de risa acogió esta disparatada exclamación.

"-¡Muchacho! ¿Te has vuelto loco? -exclamó el capitán Sheffield, ¿nos explicarás lo que esto significa?.

-Oh capitán, no me habléis - respondió Max Pamfette esforzándose para recobrar la calma. ¡Esto es el diablo!

-¡Como el diablo! -desde que estos bichos estuvieron en la marmita, dieron un olor abominable y cuantos más se cocían, más malo era el olor. Al fin, no hubo medio de resistirlo... ¡era atroz!... preguntad a Gerfault

-Olían tan mal como un paquete de pajuelas que se quemara de repente -apoyó el cocinero- un olor que picaba en la garganta; ¡una verdadera ponzoña!

-¿Es por ventura? - preguntó por su parte Pablo Magritta.

Y sin decir nada, dejando caer en la corriente como antes, Max Pamfette había hecho con su calabaza, le acercó a sus labios y luego que lo hubo retirado murmuró: -Agua sulfurosa: no tengo duda.

-¿Qué o quiénes eran aquellos "bichos que olían tan mal" y que habían estado poco antes en la marmita?

Mucho antes de estos relatos sobre Objetos Voladores no Identificados y entidades de desconocida procedencia que escapan a nuestro entendimiento por cuanto a que en aquellos días de Julio Verne se desconocía el término "extraterrestre", pero el investigador de talla internacional Ignacio Darnaude, sevillano de pura cepa, nos envió estos dos relatos para que conociéramos una faceta más - increíble también- de Julio Verne, quien llegó a convertirse en el visionario más grande de su época y la nuestra.



## CIELO DE PARIS ILUMINADO POR FLOTILLA DE OVNIS.

PARIS. ENERO 2, 1979.

Miles de personas en Bulgaria Italia, Australia, Bharein y Francia, iniciaron el año de 1979 sumidas en el estupor que les provocaba la visión de flotillas de OVNIS que festejaban -a su manera- la noche de San Silvestre. Por una sóla vez, los continentes, europeo, Asia y Oceanía rompieron el monopolio de América Latina sobre el fenómeno elaborado por el grupo de Estudios de Fenómenos Aeroespaciales no Identificados.



tales rusos, los designados con número impar: 1, 3 y 5, no subieron ningún "inconveniente" en su trayectoria, al siquiera el "Spannik III" el 15 de mayo de 1966, con 966 kg. de instrumentos delicados. En cambio, de los satélites pares, el segundo y el cuarto tuvieron encuentros con OVNIS y el sexto, no se recuerda...

## LOS «CURIOSOS» VUELVEN AL ATAQUE...

Los satélites «Ecos» también han sido seguidos, o al menos han cruzado su vuelo con el de algún cuerpo extraño. Dejamos para otra ocasión el análisis de las múltiples observaciones que se han llevado a cabo sobre extraños cuerpos que giran en torno a nuestro planeta y se despiden de Este a Oeste, al contrario que nuestros satélites, demostrando con ello que deben estar dotados de un potentísimo método propulsor. Asimismo la discusión sobre la posible existencia de bases orbitales extraterrestres.

Es destacable el hecho de que la presencia repetidamente registrada de uno identificado en el espacio pesó en los ánimos del Pentágono hasta el punto de intentar en 1960, el cometido de dicho proyecto consistía en averiguar la naturaleza de estos cuerpos extraños, sirviéndose de sondas debidamente equipadas.

La información que este proyecto suministró o está acumulando aún, constituye un ruseo cúmulo de secreto encerrado entre las paredes del Ministerio de Defensa de los Estados Unidos. Tal vez algunos lectores piensen que todo son suposiciones inargumentadas.

Si en realidad estos objetos existen, se preguntarán: ¿por qué no se ha dado este hecho al conocimiento público, como se hace con todo lo referente a la carrera espacial? Y, además, si se trata de algo real, no debía existir duda alguna al respecto, pues la precisión con que todo lo referente a nuestra técnica astronómica se realiza y controla es algo asombroso.

En efecto, gracias a este enorme control, no tan perfecto como nuestro dichoso orgullo nos mueve a pensar, los grandes, tanto de los Estados Unidos como de la Unión Soviética, saben que todas sus maniobras son cuidadosamente vigiladas por entes dotados de portentosa inteligencia, que parecen acercarse a nuestro planeta en cumplimiento de una determinada misión...

Son varias las fotografías obtenidas por los astronautas de estos «curiosos» visitantes. Aunque, desde luego, no todas han trascendido al dominio público. Tan sólo se conocen aquellas cuya existencia no pudo ser negada.

Tenemos el argumentado convencimiento de que —de lejos— no se diga ni una pequeña parte de cuanto se sabe sobre el particular. Tan sólo llegan hasta nosotros jirones de información. Aun así, como ya indicamos, obran en nuestro poder cinco escuencias fotográficas —fuera de toda duda— de estos «intrusos», que fueron publicadas por la NASA.



Versión de Tabera, sobre el insólito encuentro que tuvo Jim Hoodon, en abril de 1967, en Arkansas (Estados Unidos).

## LAS POLITICAS DEL «TOP SECRET»

Otro par de interesantes escuencias fotográficas fueron obtenidas por Mc Divitt, que voló en compañía de White a bordo del «Céminis IV», el 11 de junio de 1966, sobre un cuerpo no identificado con una especie de proyecciones como brazos, que se desplazaba a la altura de las islas Hawaii. Minutos después, a unos 800 kilómetros (White se encontraba durmiendo en la anterior ocasión) observaron dos nuevos OVNIS sobre el Caribe. Y ya días atrás habían tenido ocasión de contemplar uno que desapareció instantáneamente sobre la China comunista.

Y así toda una serie de insólitos incidentes que el espacio y el tiempo nos impiden notificar, aun brevemente.

Mientras tanto, el Centro de Inteligencia Aérea estadounidense se continúa negando la realidad que los OVNIS representan: no fenómeno digno de estudio; standiendo a la recomendación hecha por el «Fanal Robertson» —simple marioneta movida por los interesados dedos de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia (CIA)— al «Project Blue Books de la Fuerza Aérea, en enero de 1963, acerca de la necesidad de desacreditar a los platillos volantes a fin de reducir el interés público por los mismos.

Recomendación a la que atendió el «Proyecto de Cobertura», cuyo director, el desgraciadamente famoso doctor Edward U. Condon, mostró sus cartas desde el primer momento, al declarar descaradamente que: «El problema consiste en eliminar la ansiedad en torno a los OVNIS que parece existir en determinados sectores de la sociedad. Indicando acerca de los caminos por los que se proponía alcanzar el logro de su propósito:

«Nuestro estudio lo realizarían casi exclusivamente no creyen-

tes que, aunque no podrían nunca demostrar un resultado negativo, sí podrían aducir suficientes pruebas de la irrealidad de dichos fenómenos. El truco consistiría, en mi opinión, en describir el proyecto de tal forma que para el público se tratase de un estado totalmente objetivo...»

Poco había de esperarse Condon que no todo iría como él lo había planeado. En febrero de 1968, antes de que el «Proyecto» estuviese finalizado y el Comité emitiese sus conclusiones, dos de sus diez miembros principales fueron expulsados del mismo, por incompetentes. Aunque en realidad se trató de que los doctores Saunders y Levine habían descubiertos un memorándum confidencial en que se especificaban las directrices que regirían el Proyecto, y lo habían facilitado, para su publicación, al doctor McDonough, gran luchador por la causa de los OVNIS.

¿QUÉ? ¿Yes? ¿OVNIS! ¡SI! es el título del libro —traducido ya al castellano y de muy próxima publicación en edición argentina— en el que los dos doctores —que nunca llegarán a causar la categoría de «sabios» por su lamentable equivocación— lanzaron su desafío al Informe de Condon.

...

Muchos han sido los particulares tocados brevemente en estas páginas. Mucho es lo que queda por añadir sobre los mismos. Próximamente esperamos poder regresar sobre algunos puntos que apenas hemos mencionado de pasada. Hasta entonces, pensamos con Filino que eso hay nada increíble en la naturaleza: estamos esperando e investigando; el enigma se resolverá.

ENRIQUE VICENTE

(Dibujo de F. Tabera.)

A. N° 139. Oct 1969. A=9. "ALGO"

12 Octubre 1.990



Querido José Juan:

Gracias por tus ummobits del otoño, incorporados ya al UMMOCAT para el seguro refocile de los ummófilos de la posteridad. En tan pocos días en el país de Platón no hemos detectado el virus de la ufología, aunque ya sabíamos de un grupo de contactados que reciben comunicaciones, resumidas en un volumen en inglés. Tus cartas y llamadas de Saliano son excelentes piezas documentales. Llama la atención la inusitada cantidad de tiempo y esfuerzo que los manipuladores de los fenómenos UMMO/Saliano han invertido en docenas de horas de telefonazos a Sesma, Araujo, Barrenechea y demás, lo que pone de relieve una vez más que los marionetistas que controlan los hilos de los ovnis aparentan estar astutamente locos, incansables profesionales del exquisito diseño de un Absurdo institucional, avalado por algún maquiavelista paquete de inteligentísimas motivaciones, absurdo que nos está llevando a los ufólogos al hastío depresivo, a hostales psiquiátricos o al retiro. La carta que acusa a Luis Shelly de la mutilación del cadáver de Margot no podría ir descaminada, pero en tal caso la Marquesa se habría defendido enérgicamente inculpando a su vez al hijo que la denunció. Me apuesto un caldo en "Ihardy" a que seguirás sin topar con huella alguna de los actores de UMMO en el expediente de la Mano Cortada, ya que su estancia en Mayor 58 y Princesa 72 se remonta a quince años después y a caballo de la mera letra de imprenta, tan sufrida como las declaraciones de honradez de Pilar Miró y Juan Guerra. Espero que puedas conseguir una copia de "Tras la pista de UMMO". A Zor, dado su inconvincente comportamiento, más nos vale olvidarlo y apartarlo de nuestras pasiones ummológicas. No contestó, al igual que Manuel Salado. La oleada 1896/97 sobrepasa todas las expectativas. Lo importante no es que machacaran y peinaran el continente americano durante un semestre, sino la formidable maestría con la que se disfrazaron de terráqueos y consiguieron que todo un gran país se tragara el anzuelo de que se trataba de una aeronave experimental en vuelo de prueba por su inventor. Los detalles a los que recurrieron para orquestar tan gigantesco y eficaz simulacro resultan absolutamente asombrosos, y constituyen por sí mismos uno de los episodios más inconcebiblemente maquiavélicos de la historia de la ufología. De fascinante interés es la pregunta de quién organizó este impresionante despliegue histriónico, y para qué. Lo que nos demuestra una vez más la inmensa envergadura del fenómeno ufológico, y sus muy importantes repercusiones en el entramado social terrestre. Sin novedades sobre el Matrix-MJ12 Este cañonazo de semiverdades, con su espoleta autodestructiva incorporada ante la opinión pública, parece haber sido lanzada por el propio gobierno americano, como una operación de la tecnología del rumor: decir algo parecido a la verdad, pero de tal manera que luego parezca mentira. Así, cuando más tarde alguien revele la verdad-verdad, la gente no lo creerá, al asociarlo al fiasco anterior. No se lo creará al pie de la letra, pero esta percusión de dudosas mentiras/verdades acabará, a lo largo de digamos un cuarto o medio siglo, por infiltrar gradual y pacíficamente en la mentalidad popular los hechos básicos de la vida extraterrestre, sin traumas, pánicos ni anomia social. A fin de cuentas toda una refinada operación de ingeniería psicológica, para educar de manera inofensiva a las masas y revelarles, de forma asaz indirecta y tortuosa, que efectivamente hay ufonautas, y que están aquí. El N° 346, la cinta con la voz de Martha González relatando los sucesos paranormales que la asaltaron en Buenos Aires mientras su novio al investigar UMMO en España, sigue en poder de Parriols. un abrazo.



IGNACIO

Rosario, 21 de julio de 1984.-

Estimado amigo Ignacio:

Ante todo quiero agradecerte el material que me has enviado sobre la Nave Aérea; <sup>1.897</sup> me es de suma utilidad para completar el trabajo que estoy realizando y cuyo resúmen te adjunto. Desgraciadamente tu carta no me llegó a tiempo para el Simposio ya que nuestro país tuvo que soportar un paro de trabajadores postales que duró aproximadamente 20 días; había más de dos millones de cartas retenidas; seguramente la mía fue una de ellas y te debe haber llegado con mucha demora.-

Con respecto al Simposio te diré que tuvo buen nivel, habiendo trabajos para todos los gustos; uno de los que más me impresionó fue una abducción en Rhodesia, colaboración enviada por Bill Faill (te envío copia por los distintos factores que pueden encontrarse en ella. "En el Filo de la Realidad" tuvo muy buena aceptación y muchos estuvieron de acuerdo con lo que allí se postula (el resúmen que te mando me sirvió de ayuda-memoria ya que el trabajo completo aún no está terminado por razones de tiempo, estoy en época de exámenes).-

Comparto plenamente tus conceptos sobre la oleada de 1897. Creo que es uno de los casos que más luz pueden echar dentro del intrincado laberinto ovni; desgraciadamente es mencionado en muchos libros pero pocos se han preocupado por estudiarlo detalladamente. En esta oleada es como si a los testigos ALGUIEN les hubiese hecho ver como real algo que hasta ese entonces solo aparecía en historietas y cuentos de Ciencia Ficción. (a las similitudes que hay con las naves de Verne en Robur, el conquistador y otras, pueden sumárseles el vehículo espacial eléctrico "The Eclipse" de la serie Frank Reade de Luis Senarens (1892) y algunos de los modelos de Albert Robida en su obra "El Siglo XX" (1882); te envío dibujos).-

En este tipo de casos y fundamentalmente en las abducciones y contactos, a mi criterio, el factor psíquico juega un papel preponderante. Muchas veces cuando estudiamos ó analizamos algún caso nos olvidamos que el fenómeno ovni se compone de dos factores ó dos realidades: 1) el externo, ese algo (objeto ó vaya a saber que) que golpea en la psiquis de la sociedad humana y 2) lo otro, el factor interno, aquello que sale del propio individuo, testigo de alguna observación.-

En realidad el principal protagonista de esta historia es

Esto no es tan descabellado si tomamos a consideración los trabajos de Lawson, los cuales pueden llegar a darnos soluciones y crearnos problemas a la vez; soluciones porque se pone de manifiesto el componente psíquico de conservación, y problemas ya que una de nuestras más usadas herramientas, la hipótesis quedaría prácticamente descartada. Sería muy interesante ver si en todos los lugares del mundo las experiencias arrojan igual resultado; en lo personal estoy tratando de instrumentarlo en Rosario, aunque esta idea está muy verde ahora.-(te envío copia de los trabajos de Lawson, aparecidos en UFO PRESS 19 del C.I.U. - Cu/f/O.S.- de Buenos Aires.)

En otro orden de cosas te diré que hace unas semanas estuve reunido en Buenos Aires con Adalberto, quien me puso al tanto de las últimas novedades referentes a Ummo; con respecto a esto te adjunto copias de las cartas recibidas por Pedro Romaniux y Ariel Ciro Rietti (seguramente ya las tengas). Te agradecería, si no te fuera molestia, me enviaras los informes AB, CB, CL, Z, S. Bueno Ignacio, hoy me extendí más de la cuenta, espero no te haya aburrido. Te mando un fuerte abrazo y hasta la próxima.-



Remitir a:

Néstor F. Berlanda

Casilla de Correo N° 14 - Sucursal 5

2000 - Rosario - Santa Fe

ARGENTINA

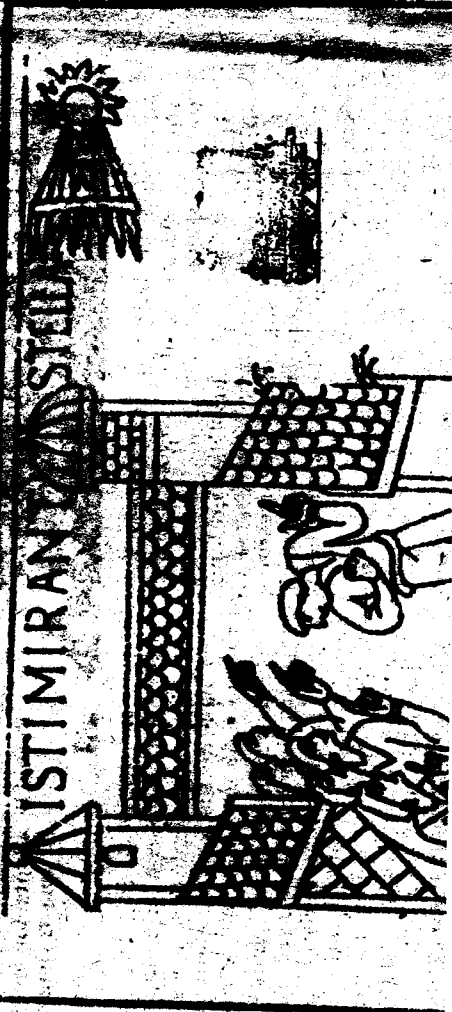
**QUEJAN** los a quienes a los millones de  
 ciudadanos americanos —cromados  
 por las periódicas hueras, hantidones, o  
 de los insomplables, descomentando de  
 que daban cuenta a sus actores que ha  
 la carea de cuberda al que se insomplaba  
 de la presencia en los actores, a veces  
 bueas en el propio punto, de otro ritmo  
 de de hantido del SW y Ochoa Mado de  
 América del Norte, de carteras legadas  
 voladores que al bien a lo largo de siglo,  
 nos años haber sido esparchamente  
 socialidos, se multiplicaron hasta llegar a  
 constituir (exponemos que más de medio  
 siglo, después) la llamada según creada.  
 1897; que el tema volvería a adquirir ac-  
 tualidad como antecedente de la epistola  
 tante —y apasionada— controversia en-  
 tre fanáticos y escépticos de la presencia  
 remota (se la hace llegar a miliciones) y  
 actual —¡qué mal informados por las  
 agencias de turismo interplanetario!—, de  
 otro Flaneta, porque aquí la etemporalidad  
 no se presenta demasado atractiva, que  
 digamos, para extraterrestres y terrícolas,  
 respectivamente.

Y tras este esordio, extremos en ma-  
 teria.  
 Nuestro buen amigo Ignacio Delgado  
 Rojas Marcos —y confidando con el  
 eficaz entusiasmo del problema, de per-  
 manente actualidad— interesó nuestra  
 modesta opinión, solicitándonos colabora-

**Por Tomás DE MARTIN-BARBADILLO**

**Visconde de Casa Gonzales**  
 2P-2-25  
 requiridos, en sus páginas, gigantes volados  
 que a la fama del prestigio anónimo  
 suscribido Carlos Ferrán apareció (V  
 West Publishing, New York 1968) un  
 dedicado a «The Great 1897 Air Flap»  
 con ilustración, interpretación, artículo  
 —pero es específico—, que por supuesto  
 de publicarnos, de un aerocronista, que mu-  
 cho más (especialmente reproducida, figura  
 en otro lugar del mismo tomo (atribuida  
 a alguien a abril de 1897).

**ABC "JAVILA"**  
 2P-2-25  
 quibles y, en sus páginas, gigantes volados  
 que a la fama del prestigio anónimo  
 suscribido Carlos Ferrán apareció (V  
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esta invención de la gran guerra 1897—, concretamente en el sentido de al tras la luz que arrojaran los informes de prensa y otros USA de equal importancia, la técnica aeronáutica terrestre finalmente—Aerostación y Aviación, o sea, más ligeros y más pesados que el aire especificamos nosotros— sería o no capaz de competir en velocidad, autonomía, maniobrabilidad, etc., con la de los ligeros aparatos en Norteamérica en esa época. Según probaremos (D. m.) en el próximo artículo —este se dedica a exponer, entre más de medio centenar, una síntesis de los casos más sobresalientes de la rotunda—; la respuesta es rotundamente negativa para la Aeronáutica terrestre, muy inferior en realizaciones a las que se atribuyen a aquellos más famosos ingenios, no ya en 1897, sino incluyendo, aproximadamente, los siete primeros años del presente siglo.

¿Trascendencia de este evidente inferioridad si pudieran probarse de manera probable las realizaciones atribuidas a los ingenios de la rotunda para los feroces propagadores de la presencia en nosotros de aeronaves tripuladas por humanoides u otros seres?

Por supuesto, ya que si esas especulaciones se podían ser de máquinas obra de la ciencia del hombre, forzosamente proveerían de otros mundos habitados (cuya posible existencia proclama en 1897, años atrás, en este A.B.C., retrospectivamente).

Pero otras consideraciones que exponeré al final del presente artículo, proyectarán sombras sobre esta rotunda perennidad de los aparatos de los orbes, humanoides, etc., etc.

De esta exhaustiva documentación he seleccionado cierto número de especulaciones de las que deduciremos algunas consecuencias en orden a sus atribuciones a las técnicas, con las inda-



Observación de evni en la Edad Media, según figura en el famoso tapiz de Bayeux (siglo XI). (De la obra de Antonio Rivera «El gran enigma de los platillos volantes». Edt. Romaire, Barcelona).

aproximadas de las mismas y aspecto también de sus capedantes?

Hay que advertir que sobre 1897, el estroplano, como aparato más pesado que el aire, de sustentación dinámica, accionado por motor y hélice, capaz de volar a velocidad de un pájoto, no existía sin el nombre (así lo veremos 1891 a 1903 de Langley; Wright, 1903-1905 de los hermanos Wright) y el pájoto dignible sin velocidad, capacidad de carga, ni autonomía inherente sería, era una máquina bastante primitiva.

Los testigos y comentaristas de la rotunda, prácticamente en su totalidad, en Aeronáutica lo ignoraban todo... como el resto de la Humanidad salvo algunos teóricos o inventores, más dotados de imaginación que plóticos de una embriónaria técnica, erróneos en parte, que años antes, llegó a desconstruir (?) la imposibilidad, por parte del hombre, de volar en máquinas más pesadas que el aire.

De ahí que las informaciones de testigos de buena fe, corrientes de una imprecisa solvencia técnica, fuera de lo más diverso y en posiciones contradictorias, y al a ello se sumó la casi ausencia de ilustraciones (la revista «Photography» de 25 de mayo 1898, publicó una formada el 29 de julio del 97 que desconocía, así como circunstancias del hecho), dificultaban aún más la formación de un sólido juicio de

En ambas ilustraciones se trata de un aparato alargado, con cúpula superior y dos alas o platos horizontales superiores, no fácilmente clasificable, por su aspecto, como más o menos ligero que el aire.

#### APARICIONES DE MÁQUINAS AERIAS DE ORIGEN DESCONOCIDO, MENTADAS EN 1897 EN CIRCULOS DE LAS TRADAS EN 1897 EN CIRCULOS DE LOS DOS DE NOROCCIDENTAL

Es de advertirse que toda la enorme información que nos ha llegado —de origen auténtico de origen, con cita de día, lugar y diario que la publicó—, es producción de prensa o libros posterior en más de medio siglo, como mínimo a 1897, de ahí que se emplea terminología técnica que resulta desconocida, como ornato ufo, humanoides, etc.

Se aquí algunos casos interesantes, que sustentamos, referidos todos a años 1897: 18-17; Nilwood (Illinois). Atención objeto desconocido de forma de cigarro, doblado de una cúpula superior, alvándose misteriosamente.

Día 12, Illinois (Green Ridge). Unos misteriosos aviones aterrizaron en objeto desconocido y un vigilante de la zona vio salir un hombre, para reparar, según manifestaba, la «máquina» de su «aparato», que era alargada como un navío y llevaba doblada cúpula.

14, Cleveland (Ohio). Un avioro, con

tas, como era lógico, de base científica sólida, cual demostrarían los resultados de la colosal obra de Estados Unidos y Rusia, que, gastando (aprovechando algunas de las monedas) — y derrochando igualmente sus capacidades — y la docena de astronautas que pisaron la Luna —, con la preciosa cooperación de los ingenieros no tripulados, las maravillas de electrónica; estos cohetes han avanzado tímidamente a algunos metros del insignificante sistema solar (miles en la inmensidad de los miles de millones de galaxias, en un vacío de tal millones de años luz), y en algunos de los planetas de nuestro sistema solar se-

simple sumatoria, y cuando los fueron entregados, pagó con un billete de diez dólares y luego volvió con la velocidad de una bala de fusil y desapareció. (Extrañísimo todo esto, ¿verdad, lector?).  
Como acaba de verse, algunos de estos ingenios voladores se describen como objetos alargados, en forma de puro mejorado, dotados de una o varias alas, y otros, provistos de alas en los costados, s'n que se especificare si eran batientes al estilo de las aves o fijas como los fusos aeroplano, sin no existentes, y si debían volar, volarían para la partida

de un barco de vapor, de tal modo me-  
tales que llevaban también el piloto, que ve-  
ría algunos vuelos.  
El otro objeto volador visto en Lan-  
cena (Iowa), alarinas y al parecer el  
vuelo, recorrió sus curvas alas gigantes-  
cas y se elevó en direcciones N. O. (Noro-  
cose dos tripulantes de largos cabellos y  
raro aspecto.  
Misma fecha, Springfield (Illinois), dos  
obreros vieron un extraño objeto posi-  
do en tierra y hablaron con la tripula-  
ción, compuesta de dos hombres y una  
mujer.



verdad hubiera minutos de Quincy a Springfield y que las tripulaciones estaba realizando reparaciones eléctricas en el espacio.

Milano (Italia), Perry Springfield (Missouri), viajeros de un tren, contemplaron un objeto que volaba bajo el cielo durante quince minutos, con luces rojas y blancas, y luego, aunque el tren derivaba a 40 millas (64 kilómetros-hora), el ingeniero se adelantó al convoy, desapareciendo rápidamente.

Milano (Italia), Benton (Texas), un objeto con forma parecida a un cigarrillo mecano, bastante ancho en el centro, con grandes alas como una enorme mariposa, brillantemente iluminado, y a 60 millas (96 kilómetros-hora), fue divisado y, diez días, en la noche del 9, miles de espectadores vieron sobre Chicago, a la altura de una villa, dos objetos en forma de cigarrillo que volaron luego sobre otras cuatro poblaciones.

Día 19, en Sistersville (West Virginia), fue divisado un objeto volador con luces rojas y verdes, que fue visto y creído que pudiera ser el mismo, sobre Jays Center (en Kansas), a unos 1,200 kilómetros.

Milano (Italia), sobre Sistersville (West Virginia), con luces resplandecientes, rojas, blancas y verdes, calificada de serotina con órbita, de longitud de unos 180 pies (aproximadamente 55 metros), con grandes alas laterales.

Día 22, Rockland (Texas), fue divisado un objeto volador cubierto, con proyecciones laterales y llevando luces, y cuando ya se acercó, se mostró un cilindro, vio un objeto con indistintas peculiaridades, que pudo ser reparar el aparato aeriónico de

### o aterrizaje...

Muy frecuentes fueron las apariciones nocturnas, siempre proyectando potentes resplandores y con luces de posición, rojas, verdes, blancas, en una época en que, por no existir el aeroplano, todavía se usaba la linterna, y solo, cuando, algún día, el globo libre, que no volaría de noche, el cielo de Estados Unidos permanecía totalmente desierto.

Entre estos avientos, los hubo que no se asemejaban a los futuros aeroplanos actuales, por carecer de planos sustentadores, tren de aterrizaje, etc., y tampoco dirigibles por su escaso volumen—apreciable a simple vista—y no precisas para poseerse, penetrar en tierra de ayuda exterior. Respecto a velocidad, que se iba aproximadamente, entre 70, 160 y hasta 200 kilómetros-hora, cuando se citan velocidades numéricas y con ingenias frases, algunas sumamente hiperbólicas, y en cuanto a dimensiones, muy difícil de precisarlas, los testigos del 1897 las citan entre otros 13 y hasta 85 metros, coincidiendo las informaciones de los mismos en la sorprendente similitud de estas máquinas que aparecen y desaparecen con gran rapidez.

### COMENTARIOS FINALES

Se nos procuró abrumadora información que abultando y hemos extractado el lector, señalando que se trata y como años atrás, se ignoraba todo en Aeronáutica, y ahora, corrimos, que la Aeronáutica práctica no existía para nosotros los terrestres, hincamos en las fatuas, gestas a veces, de Julio Verne, y demás ficción de Wells, y otros escritores car-

so existía Verne, pero, utilizamos para formas muy elementales y nada que pueda ni remotamente justificar la existencia —nos referimos a nuestra abstracción— de supercivilizaciones tan extraordinariamente superiores, poseedoras de adelantos que de producir perfectos seres, capaces de volar en sus viajes, en forma de aeroplano, muy pronto se les hubiera descubiertos, como se descubrieron, en forma de aviones, a los americanos, los pocos años después de la guerra civil y logró los 4000 kilómetros-hora, en el momento de nuestra guerra civil, y por el momento, (de ser así) en el mundo, semejante a nuestra abstracción, ya citada, de ser superior por comentaristas de hoy, que se refieren a que estudiaron, en forma de máquinas sin aparatos, y se dice que prende en general de la existencia de los hechos, de ser aeroplano, como se abarcan de la existencia de las barreras de los aviones, de las máquinas tripuladas, y de las máquinas de ignotas procedencias.

Tampoco parece desearse, en este momento del sereno y objetivo estado, sobre la información aportada, de la guerra de 1897.

Y como final, bastaría una sola palabra para calificar el aparatoso procedimiento de hoy y de hoy: misterioso.

1.896-97

1983

**Tomás Martín-Barbadillo,  
vizconde de  
la Casa González**

22 ABR 1983

Tomás Martín-Barbadillo González, vizconde de la Casa González y durante muchos años jefe de protocolo del Ayuntamiento sevillano, murió en Sevilla a la edad de 86 años, recibiendo cristiana sepultura, informa Miguel Gallardo. Tomás Martín-Barbadillo, aunque sevillano, pasó los años de su infancia en Cádiz, al ser hijo de un oficial de Infantería de Marina. De todas formas, se especializó en los temas aeronáuticos, siendo su auténtica pasión, en la que sentó una completísima autoridad.

Publicó varios libros, siendo el más importante *Sevilla, aeropuerto terminal de Europa*, publicado en el año 1934 y prologado por Juan de la Cierva. Fue asiduo colaborador del diario *El Correo de Andalucía*.

Políticamente se había definido como conservador, militando antes de los años veinte en las filas de la *Unión Maurista de Sevilla*.

Hay agradecido por tu  
servicio personal

Tomás de Martín-Barbadillo  
Abogado

Un fuerte abrazo a tu

Sevilla

adony. Jrr

Abades, 11

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ADIASA, SEVILLA, NOV - 1972

- LOS QUE NO SE LLAMARON "PLATILLOS VOLANTES" -

AUTOR: ENRIQUE CAMPOS MUÑOZ

Jacques Vallée, al referirse a la oleada aún no estudiada de 1.897, dice: "Fué una pasmosa maravilla, un signo que también apareció en el cielo, la maravillosa nave aérea que sobrevoló los Estados Unidos en la primavera de 1.897. El redescubrimiento de la notable oleada de observaciones que originó nos ha proporcionado el vínculo que nos hacía falta para enlazar las apariciones de tiempos antiguos con las modernas historias de platillos volantes! En efecto, con la oleada de Abril de 1.897 se produce el primer signo emotivo de un fenómeno que años después desbordaría todos los océanos ideológicos. El fenómeno en sí no se distingue, exceptuando en algunos detalles significativos, de los ocurridos en el presente siglo. Sin embargo, la oleada de 1897 salta todas las barreras y destaca precisamente por su gran número de aterrizajes y contactos con sus tripulantes. Estos, en presencia de todos, aterrizan, efectúan reparaciones, charlan con sus espectadores y tan misteriosamente como llegaron, desaparecen lenta y armoniosamente en un vuelo que no parece tener fin. Como dice J. Vallée, nos ha proporcionado el vínculo, el puente entre dos tácticas diametralmente diferentes. Sus motivos pueden ser claros. A la vuelta de dos siglos, la Humanidad ha experimentado un empuje sin precedente, que no podía quedar desapercibido ante los guardianes de nuestro, a veces, intrincado desarrollo científico.

El siglo XIX constituye un período totalmente ignorado en el que se han podido producir numerosas oleadas que han permanecido en el secreto cara a la ufología. Una atención hacia este período es aconsejable y necesaria. Es posible que este siglo pertenezca al período "moderno" de la actividad de nuestros extraños visitantes. Nos podemos encontrar con el primer exponente, que habría de culminar en la intensa actividad platillística de nuestros días, paralela, como decimos, a nuestro propio desarrollo.

Extendernos sobre observaciones OVNIS que rodearon a las dos contiendas mundiales es algo que se sale de nuestras posibilidades, pero no la de atraer nuestra atención hacia la interesante fecha de Abril de 1897. El 26 de Marzo, Robert Hibbard, en Sioux City (Iowa), fué atrapado por un áncora suspendida de una máquina volante desconocida, a 22 kms. de ésta ciudad. Llegó a ser levantado hasta unos 10 metros, cayendo poco después cuando sus vestidos se desgarraron. Esta observación constituye el prelude de lo que se aviesinaba. Y el día uno de Abril, en Kansas City, se produce el primer incidente: en el cielo de Kansas se puede observar "algo como un poderoso proyector dirigido hacia tierra, por algo que viajaba hacia el Este a una velocidad de unas 60 millas/h.". Y el doce se registra el primer aterrizaje, en Girard, cerca de Green Ridge (Illinois): un gran número de mineros ha visto aterrizar un objeto desconocido a 3 kms. al norte de Green Ridge, y a 4 kms. al sur de Girard. El agente de servicio de noche de la línea del ferrocarril Chicago-Alton, Paul McCramer, ha declarado que se aproximó suficientemente al ingenio para ver un hombre salir del mismo para reparar el motor (the machinery). Se han encontrado huellas sobre una gran superficie. El objeto mismo era alargado como un navío con un techo y una doble cúpula. Posteriormente, el 14, 15 y 16, también se registraron importantes aterrizajes acompañados de tripulantes. Destacamos, a grandes rasgos, la del 15 sobre Springfield (Illinois): "dos obreros agrícolas, Adolph Winkle y John Hulle, han visto un extraño ingenio que había aterrizado en un campo. Hablaron con sus ocupantes una mujer y dos hombres, y estos les dijeron que el "vehículo" había volado de Quincy a Springfield en 30 minutos y que el equipaje hacía una reparación

eléctrica". El mismo día anotamos otra observación sobre Lin Grova (Iowa), aun que su carácter es meramente evasivo. Pero el 17 se produce el asombroso incidente de Aurora (Texas), a las 6.00 a.m. y fué publicado en el "Dallas Morning News", en el que hace estallido un artefacto volador. Citemos la traducción del diario: " ..los madrugadores pobladores de Aurora quedaron atónitos por la súbita aparición del navío aéreo que ha estado navegando a travez del país Navegaba directamente sobre la plaza pública y cuando alcanzó la parte norte de la ciudad, chocó con la torre del molino de viento del Juez Proctor y fué reducido a trozos con una aterradora explosión, esparciéndose (scattering debris) sobre varios acres de terreno, arruinando el molino y el tanque de agua, y destruyendo el florido jardín del Juez. El piloto del navío, que se supone el haber sido el único a bordo del mismo, y cuyos restos están malamente desfigurados, pese a lo cual se ha escogido lo suficiente del original para muestra que no fué un habitante de este mundo. Mr. T.J. Weems, el oficial del "U.S. Signal Service" en este lugar, y una autoridad en astronomía da su opinión acerca de este (piloto) era un nativo del planeta Marte. Papeles encontrados, están escritos en algún jeroglífico desconocido. El navío estaba también bastante arruinado (was too badly wrecked) para sacar alguna conclusión acerca de su construcción o fundamento (motive power)... la ciudad está llena de gente hoy, que se hallan viendo los restos y los espécimen coleccionados del extraño metal "from the debris". El funeral del piloto debe tener lugar al medio día de mañana". En este punto, el investigador norteamericano Brad Steiger, conocido en nuestro país por su libro "Los Platillos Volantes y los Dioses", nos comenta este caso con las siguientes palabras: "las buenas gentes de Aurora aparentemente no se pararon a conjeturar que el piloto "marciano" fué de una raza temerosa de Dios. Su servicio funerario fué determinado solamente para mostrar respeto y suministrar un entierro propio de un viajero valiente". Esto caso constituye, a nuestro entender, el suceso más importante de toda la oleada norteamericana. Si esta observación se hubiera producido treinta años después, las autoridades no habrían podido negar la existencia real del fenómeno, y tendríamos en nuestro poder la prueba más palpable, más real, de que una raza de las tantas que posiblemente pueblan el espacio, nos visitan desde tiempos inmemoriales. Pero no fué así. Los hechos se produjeron en un pequeño, y solitario, y antiguo pueblo sobre el que el olvido cayó como una tumba.

Y ahora un dato anecdótico; se trata de dos observaciones en el verano de 1.873, veinticuatro años antes de la famosa oleada, que relata el pequeño libro "Misterios del Aire": "Allá por el verano del año 1.873, unos labradores que trabajaban en el campo de Bonham, Texas, se llevaron un susto mayúsculo, cuando ven aparecer en el firmamento lo que parecía una gigantesca serpiente. La noticia causó sensación. La prensa se ocupó del suceso con más o menos seriedad. Un periódico neoyorquino, tomando la cosa a broma, aseguró que aquel era el peor caso de delirium tremens que se había conocido jamás -como vemos, el actual descrédito hacia los OVNIS tiene unos antiguos antecedentes-. Pero al día siguiente, hubo de cambiar todo al ver obligado a publicar la noticia de que la famosa serpiente se había visto en Fuerte Scott, Kansas, lugar demasiado lejano de Bonham para que hubiera podido propagarse la historia hasta allí, en tan poco tiempo, el supuesto caso de histeria colectiva. Ninguna teoría científica se aportó para explicar el hecho que aún hoy sigue siendo un misterio".

Creemos que una debida catalogación de todos los casos es fundamental para poseer una visión general del fenómeno en nuestra época. Pues, después de todo, la recopilación, la depuración, el análisis y el estudio son nuestras únicas armas para desvelar el misterio de los OVNIS, problema que puede representar el advenimiento de un nuevo contacto con una raza superior que venga a

(continúa en la última página.)

- LA OLFADA NORTEAMERICANA DE 1.897 -  
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1.896-97

El 19 de Abril de 1.897, Alexander Hamilton fué despertado por un alboroto entre el ganado y salió al exterior con su hijo y su inquilino, En Leroy (Kansas). Vieron un objeto alargado, en forma de cigarro, de unos 100 metros de largo, con una cabina transparente en su parte inferior que mostraba unas estrechas bandas rojizas. El objeto se cernía a unos 10 m. sobre el suelo. Se aproximaron a menos de 50 m. de él. Estaba iluminado y provisto de un reflector. Dentro del aparato estaban "seis de los seres más extraños" que el testigo había visto; también los calificó de repugnantes. Hablaban un lenguaje que ninguno de los testigos logró entender. Una becerro fué arrastrada por el objeto con ayuda de un fuerte cable rojo. Al día siguiente la encontraron muerta en el campo. (Anatomy 16, Magonia). Esta observación corresponde al incidente más importante de los que se produjeron en ese 19 de Abril: Atlanta (Te

ADIASA, EN-73

xas), Sisterville (West Virginia), West Va. (Chicago). A partir de esta fecha decrece rápidamente la frecuencia de observaciones, para que el 28 de Mayo de saparecer totalmente.

Fu un primer intento de informar al público español sobre la importante oleada de 1.897, sobre el cielo norteamericano, dejamos nuestro artículo en el 17 de Abril con el incidente de Aurora (Texas). Un día antes, el 16, en Downs Township, Haney Savidge, mientras trabajaba en sus campos, vió un "aparato aéreo aterrizar cerca de él. Seis personajes salieron y le dirigieron la palabra durante algunos minutos antes de volver a partir". El mismo día, en varias ciudades de Texas "la gente vió un objeto oscuro pasando aparentemente a través de la Luna. Los periodistas telegrafiaron a New York diciendo que un objeto con forma de gran cigarro mexicano apareció en el cielo la última noche". En nuestro artículo anterior, la observación sobre Springfield se suma a los hechos del mismo día. También el 15, en Cheveland (Ohio), el capitán del "Sea Wing", Joseph Singler, pescaba con S.H. Davis de Detroit, cuando vieron sobre el lago lo que pensaron era un barco de unos 13 metros de largo, con una cúpula. Un hombre de unos 25 años, llevando un traje de caza y un casco, pescaba en el puente del objeto. Cerca de ellos había una mujer y un niño de unos 10 años. Cuando el "Sea Wing" se acercó, ¡un gran balón colorado se elevó del ingenio, que subió con él hasta una altitud de unos 150 metros! y se puso a describir círculos como un falcón, antes de elevarse definitivamente. "Hechos tan insólitos como éste, forman un conjunto tan chocante como es la oleada de 1.897. Los aterrizajes se producen en todos los estados de la Unión, acompañados de reparaciones del vehículo por parte de sus ocupantes o haciendo cualquier otra actividad. Los periódicos se hicieron eco de los acontecimientos e informaron a todo el público de la misteriosa aeronave, hasta hacerla famosa en su época, tan famosa como hoy los platillos volantes. ¿Pero, era sólo una nave?. Continuemos con nuestro día 15: "Linn Grove (Iowa), un gran objeto ha sido visto volando lentamente hacia el norte. Parecía dispuesto a aterrizar y 5 hombres (F.G. Ellis, James Evans, David Evans, Joe Croaskey y Benjamin Bulland) fueron corriendo a su encuentro. Apenas 7 kms. al norte de la ciudad, en contraron al ingenio en el suelo. Se acercaron hasta unos 700 metros, pero éste "extendió sus cuatro alas gigantescas" y se elevó en dirección al norte. Tenía dos extraños personajes a bordo que intentaron disimularse. Los testigos fueron sorprendidos por la longitud de sus cabellos. La mayor parte de los habitantes de Linn Grove han visto el ingenio en vuelo". Aún el 15 registró dos observaciones más: Howard Artesian (South Dakota) y Perry Spring (Missouri), que no relataremos. Y ya que hablamos de reparaciones, un día antes, el 14 de Abril, en Gas City (Indiana), un objeto aterrizó a dos kilómetros de ésta localidad sobre la propiedad de John Roush, espantando a los granjeros y haciendo huir a los animales. Seis ocupantes salieron y parecieron efectuar algunas reparaciones. Emprendieron el vuelo hacia el este. El 12 se vuelve a producir otro incidente: Milwood (Illinois). "Un objeto desconocido aterrizó en la finca de Z. Thacker, 19 kms. al norte de Carlinville. Antes de que los tres testigos pudieran llegar a él, el aparato, que tenía forma de cigarro y estaba rematado por una cúpula, se elevó con lentitud para alejarse majestuosamente hacia el Norte. Testigos: Edward Teeple, William Street y Franklin Metcalf (186, Anatomy 12, Magonia)".

Hacemos aquí un inciso para dar una visión global del fenómeno durante el siglo pasado. Como veremos a continuación, las observaciones, en su mayoría, son registradas en Europa hasta el año 1.872, a partir del cual se multiplican llegando al índice más elevado durante la oleada de 1.897. Excluiremos las españolas, que las dejaremos para futuros trabajos. Tenemos registrada la primera observación en el año 1.816, en "Inglaterra, donde se vió como aparecía en el cielo un objeto extraño mientras se sentía un terremoto" (¿coincidencia?). En 1.820, el astrónomo Francois Arago, con un catalogo durante un

eclipse de Luna, creemos que en Francia; extraños objetos a igual distancia unos de otros, evolucionaban en el cielo y conservaban su formación en los vira-  
rajes "con una precisión militar". No se halló explicación a esta visión insólita, relatada por un sabio particularmente ilustrado". Veinticinco años más tarde, concretamente el 18 de Junio de 1.845, fueron vistos durante 10 minutos tres discos luminosos, color rosa, a media milla de distancia del barco británico Victoria, en un lugar no precisado. Y un caso para Fort: el Time del 16 de Febrero de 1.855 dice que en Devonshire (Inglaterra), el 8 del mismo mes aparecieron en los tejados, en los jardines, incluso en los patios cerrados por altos muros, y en las paredes, aparecieron unas huellas extrañas que parecían de pie convexo y que fueron atribuidas al diablo. "En Julio de 1.868, una extraña "construcción aérea" provista de luces y emitiendo ruido de motores, sobrevoló a baja altura Copiaco (Chile). Sus habitantes la describieron también como un gigantesco pájaro cubierto de grandes escamas y que producía un ruido metálico. Aunque no fué en realidad un aterrizaje -añade Vallée- es el primer caso de observación a corta distancia de un objeto desconocido a escasa altura en el siglo XIX". El 22 de Marzo de 1.870, en aguas ecuatoriales del océano Atlántico, los marineros de la corbeta inglesa "Lady of the Lake" vieron un curioso objeto o "nube" en el cielo. Era de forma lenticular, con un largo apéndice posterior, según anotó el capitán F.W. Banner en el cuaderno de bitácora del barco. El croquis del objeto, hecho por el capitán Banner, recuerda extraordinariamente a un platillo volante. Nunca mejor expresada la frase de Mademoiselle Bertin, que dice: "No hay nada nuevo, salvo lo que se ha olvidado".

En Marsella (Francia), aparece otro "misterioso objeto" en 1.871. En el 72 apareció en Banbury (Gran Bretaña). En el 73, en Bonham (Texas) y Fuerte Scott (Kansas) (1). Y en 1.877, otro caso importante sobre Aldershot (Gran Bretaña), extraído de Magonia: "Un extraño ser con traje muy ajustado y casco brillante se corrió sobre las cabezas de los centinelas, que le dispararon sin resultados. La aparición los aturdió con algo descrito como "fuego azul" (FSR, 61)". Nos apresuramos a agregar que, aunque no conste en Magonia, la observación se produce el 15 de Mayo. Volviendo a los "platillos", el Daily News de Denison, en Enero de 1.878, afirmaba que un granjero llamado John Martin, mientras estaba labrando, vió un extraño aparato que se le acercaba. Cuando lo tuvo encima se dió cuenta con estupefacción de que tenía la forma de un enorme plato. Y de "platos", pasamos a "caballos": "En 1.878, un labrador de Parkersburg, Virginia Occidental, vió un "caballo blanco" en el aire. Nadaba en la atmósfera a cosa de un kilómetro del suelo".

Dejamos aquí la casuística anterior a 1.897 "so pena" de matarnos el espacio. Baste agregar que dejamos docena y media de casos sin relatar. Pasamos al año posterior al 97. "El 8 de Julio de 1.898, el corresponsal de la revista "Nature", vió en la ciudad alemana de Kiel, un objeto celestial enrojecido por el Sol, ancho como un arco iris que "permaneció brillando durante unos minutos, y luego dió un rápido brinco". Volvió a quedarse inmóvil y desapareció de improviso, ocho ó diez minutos más tarde". El Octubre del mismo año, en Marsella, Francia, se registra otra observación que la damos por negativa pese a su espectacularidad.

Volviendo a la oleada de 1.897, el 6 de Mayo, cuando la oleada empieza notablemente a declinar, se registra otro "clásico" de sus años: "Hot Springs, Arkansas. Dos agentes de la Ley, llamados Sumpter y McLenore, iban a caballo al noroeste de Hot Springs, cuando vieron una luz brillante en el cielo. Cosa de 7 kms. más adelante, volvieron a ver la luz, que esta vez descendía hacia tierra. Un kilómetro más adelante, los caballos se negaron a avanzar. Vieron a dos hombres provistos de lámparas. Los testigos empuñaron sus rifles, llamaron a los desconocidos y estos les dijeron que viajaban por el país con un aparato volador. En el claro se distinguía la silueta de la máquina, de unos 20 metros de larga. Junto a ella, estaba una mujer con un paraguas. Llovía, y



el más joven de los dos hombres, se dedicaba a llenar de agua un enorme odre. El mayor llevaba barba e invitó a los agentes a darse una vuelta en su nave, hasta un "lugar donde no llueve". Los testigos volvieron a pasar por el mismo sitio 40 minutos después y no vieron nada. (FSR 66, 4; Magonia)". El 28 de 1 mismo mes, la "mayoría de la población de Omaha (Nebraska) ha observado un ob jeto llegado del Sud-Este. Parecía de una inmensa luminosidad. Voló lentamen- te hacia el Nor-Oeste y descendió a baja altura. La muchedumbre se reunió en un rincón de la calle para observarlo".

Aquí termina la oleada. Y aquí comienza el período "moderno" de la activi- dad de esos seres que se mueven en la más absoluta clandestinidad. Trepidante aventura vivida en una época sobre la que cayó el olvido del tiempo.

¿Mito o realidad?. Mito soberbio, en todo caso, surgido de lo más hondo de los tiempos..., y resaca del futuro (2).

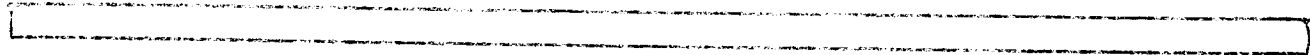
Enrique CAMPOS MUÑOZ

NOTAS:

(1): Ver artículo "Los que no se llamaron Platillos Volantes", en el núme- ro anterior de éste Boletín.

(2): Últimas frases del capítulo II del "Retorno de los Brujos".

Se agradece la colaboración de Enrique Vicente.



Si Ud. aún no recibe éste Boletín, y si le interesa conocer con más claridad y en su verdadera dimensión la problemática OVNI, suscríbase hoy mismo rella- nando el cupón que abajo publicamos y envíelo al apartado 2.029 de Sevilla, y recibirá en muy pocos días un ejemplar de esta publicación.

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SE SUSCRIBE POR UN PERIODO DE UN AÑO, AL

BOLETIN INFORMATIVO ANDALUZ

**CLIPEOSTORIA****LUGLIO 1973**

da «Fate»

# LE MISTERIOSE MACCHINE VOLANTI DELL'OTTOCENTO

*Non c'era nulla che volasse o potesse volare, in quell'epoca. Eppure...*

**V**entisei marzo, 1880. Un tranquillo venerdì sera nella piccola Galisteo Junction, una cittadina del Nuovo Messico (odierna Lamy). Il treno, proveniente dalla vicina Santa Fé, era arrivato e già ripartito, e l'agente ferroviario, finita la sua giornata di lavoro, chiuse meccanicamente il magazzino della stazione e uscì con due amici per una breve passeggiata.

Improvvisamente udirono alcune voci che sembravano provenire dal cielo. I tre uomini alzarono gli occhi e videro un oggetto di mostruosa grandezza, che si avvicinava rapidamente da ovest, volando talmente basso che si potevano distinguere alcuni fregi, abilmente disegnati sull'esterno dello strano veicolo. All'interno, gli occupanti (circa 10), che sembravano normali esseri umani, stavano ridendo e gridando in una lingua sconosciuta e da terra fu udita anche della musica, sempre proveniente dall'oggetto volante. Quest'ultimo era a forma di pesce — una specie di sigaro con la coda — e si spostava nel cielo grazie ad un enorme ventilatore. Mentre passava sopra i tre amici, uno degli occupanti gettò alcuni oggetti. L'agente ferroviario e i suoi amici ne recuperarono uno subito, si trattava di un bel fiore con attorno una striscia di sottile carta-seta sulla quale si trovavano dei caratteri, che ricordarono ai tre uomini i disegni che essi avevano visto sui contenitori giapponesi di tè. Subito dopo l'imbarcazione volante si alzò in cielo e si diresse velocemente verso oriente. Il giorno dopo alcuni ricercatori trovarono una tazza — uno degli oggetti che i testimoni avevano visto gettare dalla « macchina », ma

che non era stato possibile localizzare a causa dell'oscurità.

« L'oggetto è di foggia assai particolare », riportava il *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican*, « completamente differente da ogni altro oggetto usato in questo paese ».

L'agente della ferrovia prese il fiore e la tazza e li mise in mostra. Tuttavia, prima che il giorno fosse finito, questa prova materiale del passaggio del primo oggetto volante non identificato era scomparsa. Infatti, la sera stessa un misterioso signore, identificato solo come « un collezionista di curiosità », comparve nella cittadina, esaminò i reperti, suggerì l'idea che fossero di origine asiatica e offrì per essi una somma di denaro così alta, che l'agente non ebbe nessuna difficoltà ad accettare. Il « collezionista » raccolse i suoi acquisti, si allontanò e non fu mai più visto.

Certamente la storia dell'aviazione non comincia il 17 dicembre del 1903, giorno in cui l'aereo dei fratelli Wright volò per 12 secondi a Kitty Hawk, ma assai prima che scienziati ed inventori lottassero per scoprire i segreti del volo: di costruire cioè quello che un articolo apparso su « Scientific American » chiamava « La vera macchina volante ».

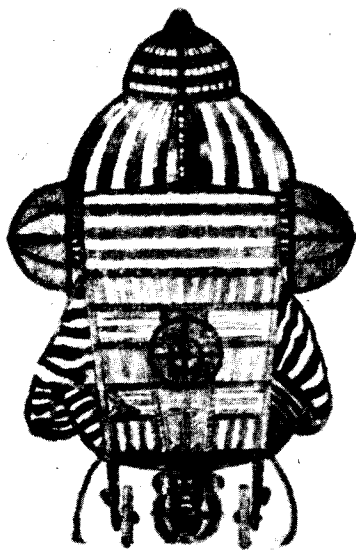
Ma nulla ci può dire che cosa ci facesse un enorme sigaro volante sopra il Nuovo Messico, nel 1880. La sua « mostruosa grandezza » e il suo propulsore a forma di ventaglio, indicano chiaramente che era più pesante dell'aria, ma secondo il parere dell'esperto inglese Charles H. Gibbs Smith, una simile macchina volante non doveva esistere a quell'epoca. « ...Posso affermare con certezza che prima del 1910, nel Nord America, i soli velivoli che potessero trasportare passeggeri, erano le mongolfiere e gli

aerostati ed è altamente improbabile che potessero essere scambiati, per qualcos'altro. Inoltre non esisteva alcun tipo di dirigibile o altra macchina volante simile ».

## Il segreto di Dellschau

Durante il 1850 misteriose « astronavi » attraversarono con regolarità i cieli della Germania e fu poco prima di quel periodo, probabilmente nel 1848, che un enigmatico giovane tedesco, chiamato C. A. A. Dellschau, emigrò negli Stati Uniti. Grazie a una sua testimonianza sappiamo che nel 1850 egli si trovava a Sonora, una cittadina mineraria della California. Dove fosse stato nei dieci anni seguenti non è dato sapere. Sappiamo, comunque, che verso la fine del secolo sposò una vedova e fissò la sua residenza a Houston, nel Texas, dove visse in effettiva solitudine. Non aveva amici; quanto si dice, il suo carattere irascibile tenne tutti a distanza. Dopo essere stato allontanato dai pochi che lo conoscevano, per la sua stravaganza Dellschau dedicò le sue ore alla compilazione di una serie di album, che riempì con ritagli di giornale, disegni e con misteriose annotazioni. Egli morì nel 1924 all'età di 92 anni.

Se non fosse stato per una casuale scoperta avvenuta molti anni dopo la vita e l'opera di Dellschau sarebbero rimaste sconosciute. Ma un giorno del maggio 1969 accadde che un ufologo, P. G. Navarro, si trovasse a passare vicino a una mostra dell'aviazione, presso l'università di S. Tommaso a Houston. Due grandi album (quelli di Dellschau) attirarono la sua attenzione ed egli si fermò per esaminarli ulteriormente. Egli scoprì che gli album contenevano vecchie notizie, racconti e articoli sui tentativi di



*Gli album di Dellschau contenevano un gran numero di disegni riprodoti bizzarre aereonavi*

vari inventori di costruire macchine volanti più pesanti dell'aria.

Ma tutto quel materiale non era così interessante come i disegni di Dellschau, riproducenti strani, ingombranti vascelli che egli affermava *avessero realmente volato in una certa epoca*. Poiché si era risvegliata la sua curiosità, Navarro fece ricerche approfondite degli album di Dellschau e dopo un certo periodo di tempo riuscì ad acquistarne altri dieci — trovandoli nei luoghi più disparati, come in un negozio per articoli marineschi di Houston e presso una collezionista di opere d'arte che si era interessata agli strani disegni di Dellschau. Navarro si recò persino a parlare con la figliastra di Dellschau, ormai vecchia. Infine si accinse a decifrare gli appunti di Dellschau che erano stati scritti in inglese, tedesco e in codice. Quando finì, aveva ricostruito una storia incredibile. Una cosa era chiara: Dellschau era incerto riguardo a ciò che aveva scritto. Da una parte voleva che i suoi « segreti » venissero svelati; dall'altra sembrava timoroso di parlare direttamente. Così egli venne ad un compromesso e scrisse in una tale maniera da scoraggiare tutti, tranne il più risoluto dei ricercatori futuri, ed anche così, nel complesso, i suoi scritti acquistano un che di mistero.

Dagli appunti Navarro apprese che nel 1850 Dellschau e un gruppo di soci, circa 60 in tutto, si riunirono a Sonora e fondarono un « Aero-Club », costruendo e volandoci in seguito, macchine più pesanti dell'aria. Essi lavoravano in un campo aperto vicino Columbia, una cittadina nei pressi di So-

nora. Il club lavorava in segreto ed ai suoi componenti non era permesso di parlare della loro attività né di usare l'aereo (se così lo possiamo chiamare) per i loro scopi personali. Un membro che minacciava di affittare la sua macchina al pubblico con la speranza di fare fortuna, morì in un'esplosione aerea — vittima, suggerisce Dellschau — di un assassinio. Un altro, un meccanico specializzato — identificato come Gustav Freyer, — fu chiamato a rendere conto al club del suo comportamento per essersi rifiutato di dare nuove informazioni. Era chiaro che non si trattava di un comune circolo sociale. L'« Aero Club » era una filiale di una più vasta società segreta, le cui iniziali, secondo Dellschau, erano « NYMZA ». Egli dice poco di questa società; fa notare solo che nel 1858 era capeggiata da un certo George Newell di Sonora. Altrove egli accenna agli ordini di sconosciuti superiori che sovrintendevano alle attività del club.

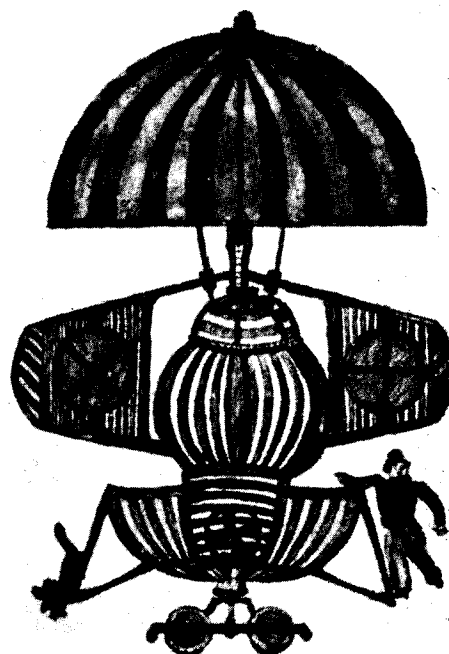
Questi ignoti superiori non erano autorità governative, poiché Dellschau scrive che una volta un ufficiale, venuto a conoscenza del loro lavoro, tentò di convincerli a vendere le loro invenzioni per usarle come armi da guerra. Gli ignoti superiori diedero l'ordine di respingere l'offerta.

Il club aveva a sua disposizione un certo numero di apparecchi. Tuttavia, osservando i disegni di Dellschau, è difficile credere che un qualcosa somigliante a quelle macchine possa mai aver volato. Inoltre Navarro fa notare: « ..La pesante struttura delle macchine appare completamente sproporzionata ai palloni che si suppone sollevassero quelle bizzarre invenzioni. Considerando poi la grande quantità di gas (generalmente idrogeno o elio) necessaria a sollevare uno dei moderni dirigibili, è inconcepibile come la piccola quantità di gas usata per le macchine di Dellschau fosse sufficiente a sollevarle ».

Ma quello non era gas comune! Secondo Dellschau si trattava di una sostanza chiamata « NB » che aveva il potere di « annullare il peso »!

Gli appunti di Dellschau hanno un tono curiosamente pessimistico. Uno strano paragrafo dice testualmente: « Noi tutti siamo insieme nelle nostre tombe. Ci riuniamo in casa mia. Mangiamo e beviamo e siamo allegri. Noi facciamo un lavoro mentale, ma tutti sono in condizioni disperate, come se sentissero che stanno combattendo una battaglia perduta in partenza. Ma c'è

una remota possibilità che il destino crei l'uomo giusto ». Dellschau parla inoltre della razza umana e perfino del pianeta Terra come se egli non ne facesse parte. Altrove un disegno mostra l'immagine di un diavolo che, su uno degli « Aerei » apre un varco nel-



*Riproduzione di una curiosa macchina aerea disegnata da Dellschau*

la struttura celeste. L'impressione globale che si ha dagli scritti di Dellschau è quella di un uomo a conoscenza di segreti che lo renderebbero in qualsiasi epoca un estraneo, un isolato dal resto dell'umanità.

Chi era? Un narratore di incredibili favole? Ma a quale scopo? Se fu realmente e soltanto questo, perché passò anni e anni a compilare quaderni — dedicando al lavoro gran parte delle ore notturne — con l'esile speranza che un lontano giorno del futuro, molto tempo dopo la sua morte, qualcuno potesse crederci?

*Jerome Clark e Loren Coleman  
(da « Fate » Trad. di F. Magini)*

## LA MAGIA SVELATA

*a cura di Fulvio Rendhell*

**A causa dei noti ritardi postali ci è pervenuta in ritardo la rubrica di Fulvio Rendhell « La magia svelata »; la terza parte de « La magia nello spiritismo », nella quale vengono esaminate le cinque fasi in cui è suddivisa una seduta spiritica, verrà pubblicata sul prossimo fascicolo.**

tima unione del profano e dello spirituale, i quali camminano sempre fraternizzati su parallele di mutuo aiuto in tutte le loro traiettorie. Per questo il gran genio di Einstein ci avvertì: "Ogni avanzamento della scienza è una nuova finestra aperta all'infinito per ammirare il Supremo Fattore".

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Nel prossimo numero: i dischi volanti visti e fotografati da Padre Reyna dall'osservatorio astronomico di Adhara  
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### G L I A T T E R R A G G I

Nel luglio 1868 a Copiaco (Cile) una strana "costruzione aerea" con delle luci e facente rumore di motori sorvolò la città a bassa quota. La gente del luogo la descrisse pure come un uccello gigante coperto di grandi scaglie e producente un rumore metallico.

Il 7 dicembre 1872, ore 01,00, a Banbury (Gr. Bretagna) un oggetto simile a un covone di fieno fu visto volare in modo irregolare. Qualche volta, alto qualche volta bassissimo era accompagnato da fuoco e da un fumo denso. Produceva lo stesso effetto di un tornado perchè abbatteva alberi e muri. Scomparve bruscamente.

Il 12 aprile 1897, alle 14,30, nella proprietà di M.Z. Thacker, a 19 Km. di Carlinville (Illinois - U.S.A.) atterrò un oggetto sconosciuto. Prima che i tre testimoni si avvicinasero, l'apparecchio a forma di sigaro con una cupola si levò lentamente e partì maestosamente verso nord. Testimoni: M. Edward Teeples, William Street e Franklin Metcalf.

Il 12 aprile 1897, alle ore 18, una gran folla di minatori vide atterrare un oggetto sconosciuto a tre chilometri a nord di Green Ridge e a 4 Km. a sud di Girard (Illinois). L'agente di servizio notturno sulla linea ferroviaria Chicago-Alton, Paul McCramer, dichiarò che si era avvicinato all'apparecchio per vedere un uomo che era uscito dalla macchina per riparare il motore. Si trovarono tracce su una grande superficie. L'oggetto era di forma allungata con un tetto e una duplice cupola.

Il 14 aprile 1897 alle ore 15 un oggetto

prietà di John Roush, spaventando i contadini e facendo fuggire i cavalli ed il bestiame. Uscirono sei piloti per eseguire alcune riparazioni. Prima che i contadini si avvicinasero, l'apparecchio rapidamente si sollevò e partì verso Est. (Indiana - U.S.A.).

17  
Il 14 aprile 1897 a Cleveland (Ohio) Joseph Singler, capitano del "Sea Wing" stava pescando con S.H. Davis di Detroit quando entrambi videro sul lago un oggetto, lungo tredici metri, con una cupola. Un uomo di 25 anni in tenuta da caccia e con un casco pescava dal ponte dell'oggetto. Quando la "Sea Wing" si avvicinò all'apparecchio, un grande pallone colorato si levò dall'oggetto il quale salì con quello fino ad un'altezza di circa 150 metri mettendosi a descrivere dei cerchi prima di allontanarsi definitivamente.

Il 15 aprile 1897 a Linn Grove (Iowa) fu visto un grande oggetto volare lentamente verso Nord. Sembrava che stesse per atterrare e cinque uomini (F.G. Ellis, James Evans, David Evans, Joe Croaskey e Benjamin Buland)<sup>gli</sup> andarono incontro. A circa 7 Km. a nord della città trovarono l'apparecchio a terra, ma questo "spiegò le sue quattro ali giganti e si levò in direzione nord". A bordo dell'apparecchio c'erano due strani personaggi che cercavano di nascondersi. I testimoni rimasero sorpresi per la lunghezza dei loro capelli. La maggior parte degli abitanti di Linn Grove vide la macchina in volo.

Il 15 aprile 1897 a Springfield (Illinois) due operai agricoli, Adolph Winkler e John Hulle, videro uno strano apparecchio che era atterrato in un campo. Parlarono con i piloti, una donna e due uomini, e questi dissero che il "vascello" aveva volato da Quincy a Springfield in 30 minuti e che stavano eseguendo una riparazione elettrica.

Il 16 aprile 1897 a Downs Township (U.S.A.) mentre Haney Savidge lavorava nel suo campo vide un apparecchio atterrare vicino a lui. Uscirono sei piloti e glirrivolsero la parola per alcuni minuti prima di ripartire.

Il 17 aprile 1897 a Williamston (Michigan - U.S.A.) una dozzina di contadini vide un apparecchio manovrare nel cielo per un'ora prima di atterrare. Un

tezza, quasi nudo, che sembrava soffrisse il caldo, era il pilota dell'apparecchio. La sua voce quasi musicale sembrava un seguito di mugiti. Uno dei coltivatori gli si avvicinò e ricevette un colpo che gli fracassò una gamba.

Il 20 aprile 1897 alle ore 18 ad Ho-man (Arkansas) il capitano James Hooton era a caccia nei dintorni della città quando udì come un rumore di macchina a vapore e vide poi un apparecchio simile a un cilindro dalle estremità appuntite con delle ruote laterali e palette orizzontali al di sopra. Hooton parlò con un pilota che portava gli occhiali neri e camminava sotto l'apparecchio. C'erano 3 o 4 esseri. Gli fu detto che effettivamente aveva sotto gli occhi i famosi apparecchi aerei di cui tutti parlavano e che erano azionati con aria compressa. Hooton vide le ruote girare quando l'apparecchio si levò e scomparve.

Il 22 aprile 1897 alle 23,30 a Rock-land (Texas) John M. Barclay fu incuriosito quando il suo cane abbaiò furiosamente ed egli intese un rumore acuto. Uscì e vide un apparecchio volante a 5 metri al di sopra del suolo, descrivendo dei cerchi. Era allungato con delle protuberanze e con delle luci accecanti che si spensero quando atterrò. Barclay fu avvicinato da un uomo il quale gli disse che le sue intenzioni erano pacifiche e chiese alcuni articoli di chincaglieria per riparare il suo apparecchio. Egli li pagò con un biglietto di 10 dollari e ripartì "con la velocità di un proiettile che esce dal fucile".

Il 22 aprile 1897, alle ore 24, a Jos-se-rand (Texas) Franck Nichols fu svegliato dal rumore di una macchina. Avendo guardato fuori vide un oggetto potentemente illuminato, posato a terra nel campo di grano. Si avvicinò e fu fermato da due uomini che gli chiesero il permesso di prendere dell'acqua dal suo pozzo. Successivamente ebbe una discussione con una mezza dozzina di uomini, facenti parte dell'equipaggio della macchina. Gli spiegarono il meccanismo ma non potette comprendere le spiegazioni.

Il 23 aprile 1897 a Mc Kinney Bayou (Arkansas - U.S.A.) il giudice Lawrence

cupato da tre uomini - disse - che parlavano una lingua straniera; ma, a giudicarli dal loro aspetto, si potevano scambiare per giapponesi".

18  
Il 6 maggio 1897 a Hot Springs (Arkansas) due agenti di polizia, Sumpter e Mc Lenore, andavano a cavallo a NW di questa città quando videro una luce brillante nel cielo, 7 Km. più lontano; la luce riapparve discendendo verso il suolo. Un chilometro più lontano, i cavalli rifiutarono di proseguire. I poliziotti videro due uomini che portavano delle luci. Gli agenti presero le loro armi, chiamarono gli stranieri ed essi dissero che percorrevano il paese in un apparecchio volante. La macchina era lunga circa 20 metri. Pioveva; il più giovane dei due uomini riempì d'acqua un grande recipiente. L'altro che portava una barba propose agli agenti di salire nel loro apparecchio "per andare in un luogo dove non pioveva". Gli stessi testimoni passarono di nuovo per lo stesso posto dopo 40 minuti, ma non vi trovarono più nessuno.

Il 28 ottobre 1902, alle ore 03,05, nel Golfo della Guinea, tre persone che si trovavano a bordo del "Fort Salisbury", fra le quali l'ufficiale in seconda A.H. Raymer, videro davanti un enorme oggetto scuro sul quale spiccavano delle luci. Osservarono poi che affondava lentamente nel mare. La lunghezza stimata era di 200 metri.

Nel 1908 presso la Costa del Delaware il battello inglese "Le Mohican" che si dirigeva verso Filadelfia al comando del Capitano Urghart fu avvolto da una spessa nuvola luminosa che magnetizzò tutto a bordo. Si notò che l'ago della bussola era impazzito. Quando i marinai cercarono di spostare le catene sul ponte metallico si accorsero che esse erano attaccate. La nuvola si alzò subito e per qualche tempo fu osservata al di sopra del mare.

Il 18 maggio 1909, alle ore 23, a Caerphilly (Galles) il sig. Lethbridge che stava camminando lungo una strada, in vicinanza delle montagne, vide, posato sull'erba, un grande apparecchio a forma di tubo, dentro il quale si trovavano due uomini vestiti di pelliccia. Questi parlavano in maniera molto animata in una lin-

CASISTICA ANTICA

# AERONAVI

SUGLI **U.S.A.** IN aprile e maggio 1897

Presentiamo per la rubrica di avvistamenti relativi al periodo "storico", ed in occasione del suo ottantesimo anniversario, una parte della casistica dell'ondata d'avvistamenti d'"aeronavi" che s'abbattè sull'America settentrionale tra il luglio 1896 e l'agosto 1897. Attualmente sono noti circa 2500 casi, di cui almeno duecento hanno resistito ad ogni tentativo di spiegazione. I nostri archivi contengono circa 300 segnalazioni relative a quel periodo, così che per ragioni di spazio abbiamo dovuto limitarci ad un aspetto: quello della presenza di "occupanti" delle "aeronavi". Ci sono noti 25 di questi incidenti, e li presentiamo qui di seguito, togliendo solo quelli che si sono rivelati falsi, che vengono riportati altrove in questo numero. Per maggior completezza di questa rassegna, includiamo anche i casi già riportati su libri e riviste specializzate italiane, segnalando doverosamente anche queste fonti. Sono invece state tolte le fonti del tempo, limitandoci a quelle ufologiche.

1897.04.11/21.00-Milwaukee (WI). Migliaia di persone osservano un'aeronave giungere sulla città arrivando dal lago Michigan. L'oggetto, che è di forma ovoidale, scuro, con una luce brillante attaccata sotto, si ferma di colpo a circa 30 metri al di sopra del Municipio, rimanendo immobile per un quarto d'ora. Il poliziotto di guardia osserva delle "ruote" che girano sull'aeronave ed un uomo che la osserva con un binocolo vede distintamente quattro uomini a bordo. (Lore & Denault, "Mysteries from the Skies" p.19; Merseyside UFO Bulletin vol.5 n.5 p.50)

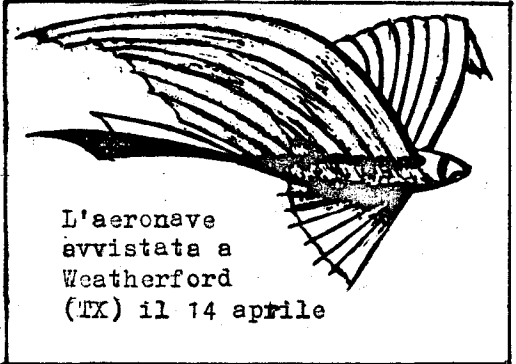
1897.04.12/18.15-Girard (IL). Un gruppo di minatori vede un oggetto di forma allungata ed appuntito alle estremità atterrare in un campo. Su entrambi i lati ci sono delle ali, e l'aeronave assomiglia ad una barca con una calotta sopra a mo' di tetto. Alcuni operai delle ferrovie s'avvicinano abbastanza da riuscire a vedere una "M" ed altre lettere sulla fiancata. Un uomo viene visto uscire ed arrampicarsi sul velivolo e riparare un macchinario. Dopo quindici minuti l'oggetto riparte verticalmente. Impronte di piedi umani vengono trovate sul posto. ("Misteries from the Skies" p.20; caso n.15 dell'appendice "A Century of Landings" del "Passport to Magonia" di Vallée; MUFOB 5:5 p.51; GdM n.67 p.19)

CLY, MZ-JN<sup>11</sup> 77

1897.04.14/15.00-Gas City (IN). Un oggetto atterra vicino ad una fattoria terrorizzando i contadini e facendo fuggire precipitosamente cavalli e mucche. Sei occupanti escono e sembrano fare qualche riparazione. Prima che la gente riesca ad avvicinarsi l'oggetto si innalza rapidamente allontanandosi. (Magonia n.16; MUFOB 5:5 p.51)

1897.04.14/ ? . ?-Cleveland (OH). Dal ponte della "Sea Wing", il capitano della barca ed un amico osservano sul lago una "nave", lunga circa 13 metri, con una calotta sopra. Un giovane sui 25 anni, vestito da cacciatore, sta pescando dal ponte e vicino a lui ci sono una donna ed un bambino. Quando la "Sea Wing" si avvicina, un grande "pallone" colorato si innalza dalla "nave" fino a circa 150 metri, gira per un po' in cerchio e poi s'allontana. (Magonia n.17; MUFOB 5:5 p.51)

1897.04.15/ ? . ?-Linn Grove (IA). Un grande oggetto viene visto di mattina sorvolare lentamente la città ed atterrare in un campo. Cinque persone s'avvicinano fino a circa 700 metri, ma l'oggetto distende quattro ali "mostruosamente gigantesche" e si innalza dopo che due occupanti definiti "strani" gettano fuori bordo due massi "di ignota composizione", tentando disperatamente di nascondersi. Ciò che più sorprende i testimoni è l'insolita lunghezza dei loro capelli (o delle barbe, o delle basette, a seconda dei vari resoconti). (Magonia n.18; FSR dicembre '68, p.6; MUFOB 5:5 p.51; Keel, "Operazione cavallo di Troia" p.81)



1897.04.15/12.00-Springfield(IL). Due contadini si imbattono in un'aeronave atterrata in un campo, e discutono con i tre occupanti (due uomini ed una donna). I tre riferiscono d'aver impiegato mezz'ora per arrivare là da Quincy (percorrendo quindi i 100 chilometri di distanza all'inverosimile velocità di 200 km/h). Sono atterrati lì per riparare l'apparato elettrico ed il faro di bordo. Rilasceranno al governo un resoconto completo sulla loro aeronave "quando Cuba acquisterà l'indipendenza". (FSR febbraio '65 p.31; Magonia n.21; MUFOB 5:5 p.51; "Operazione Cavallo di Troia" p.81)

1897.04.16/ ? . ?-Downs (IL). Un contadino che lavora in un campo vede una "nave aerea" atterrare lì vicino e 6 uomini uscirne. I sei discutono con lui qualche minuto e poi ripartono. (Magonia n.22; MUFOB 5:5 p.52)

1897.04.16/ ? . ?-Farmersville (TX). Parecchie persone osservano il passaggio a bassa quota dell'"aeronave". Due testimoni sosten-



gono d'aver osservato tre persone a bordo ed uno d'averli sentiti cantare canti religiosi [voci umane provenienti da "aeronavi" vengono udite anche a Galesburg (MI) il 3, a Fontanelle (IA) il 12, a Pine Lake (MI) il 15, a Vermillion (SD) il 17 e ad Holton (MI) il 29 aprile; altri casi simili si registrarono nell'ondata del novembre 1896 sulla California]. Come se non bastasse, dall'aeronave vengono gettati giù opuscoli contro l'uso degli alcolici. (FSR dicembre 66 p.8 e febbraio 67 p.21; "Operazione cavallo di Troia" p.98)

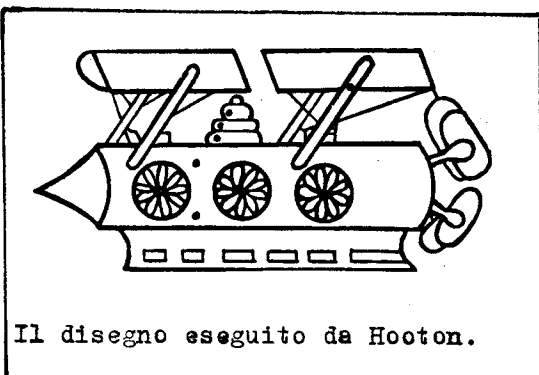
1897.04.16/ ? ?-Hudson (MI). A tarda notte, un gruppo di ragazzi ed un adulto osservano una luce rossa brillante che si sposta sulla città; a circa 8 metri di distanza ce n'è un'altra verde e sopra di esse si intravede il profilo d'un oggetto scuro, a bordo del quale ci sono alcuni uomini, uno dei quali saluta i testimoni agitando un berretto. (FSR dicembre 68 p.6)

1897.04.17/ ? ?-varie località del Texas. Storie incomplete di persone che hanno parlato con membri di equipaggi di aeronavi a Stephenville, Waxahachie e Greenville. (FSR febbraio 67 p.21)

1897.04.19/23.00-Beaumont (TX). Padre e figlio che tornano a casa a cavallo vedono delle luci in un campo e si imbattono in un oggetto scuro, enorme, attorno al quale s'aggirano 4 uomini, che i due guidano fino a casa perché possano rifornirsi d'acqua. Uno degli uomini (ciascuno dei quali ha due secchi in mano), che dice di chiamarsi Wilson, rivela che la loro aeronave sta tornando da un volo di prova sul Golfo del Messico, e che in realtà ce ne sono cinque, costruite in un villaggio dell'Iowa. Il padre li accompagna alla loro macchina, lunga circa 40 metri e larga 6, e gli viene spiegato che è propulsa da enormi ali, due per lato, ed è guidata con delle eliche. L'oggetto è in acciaio e al testimone viene spiegato nei dettagli il suo funzionamento, basato sull'uso dell'aria compressa.

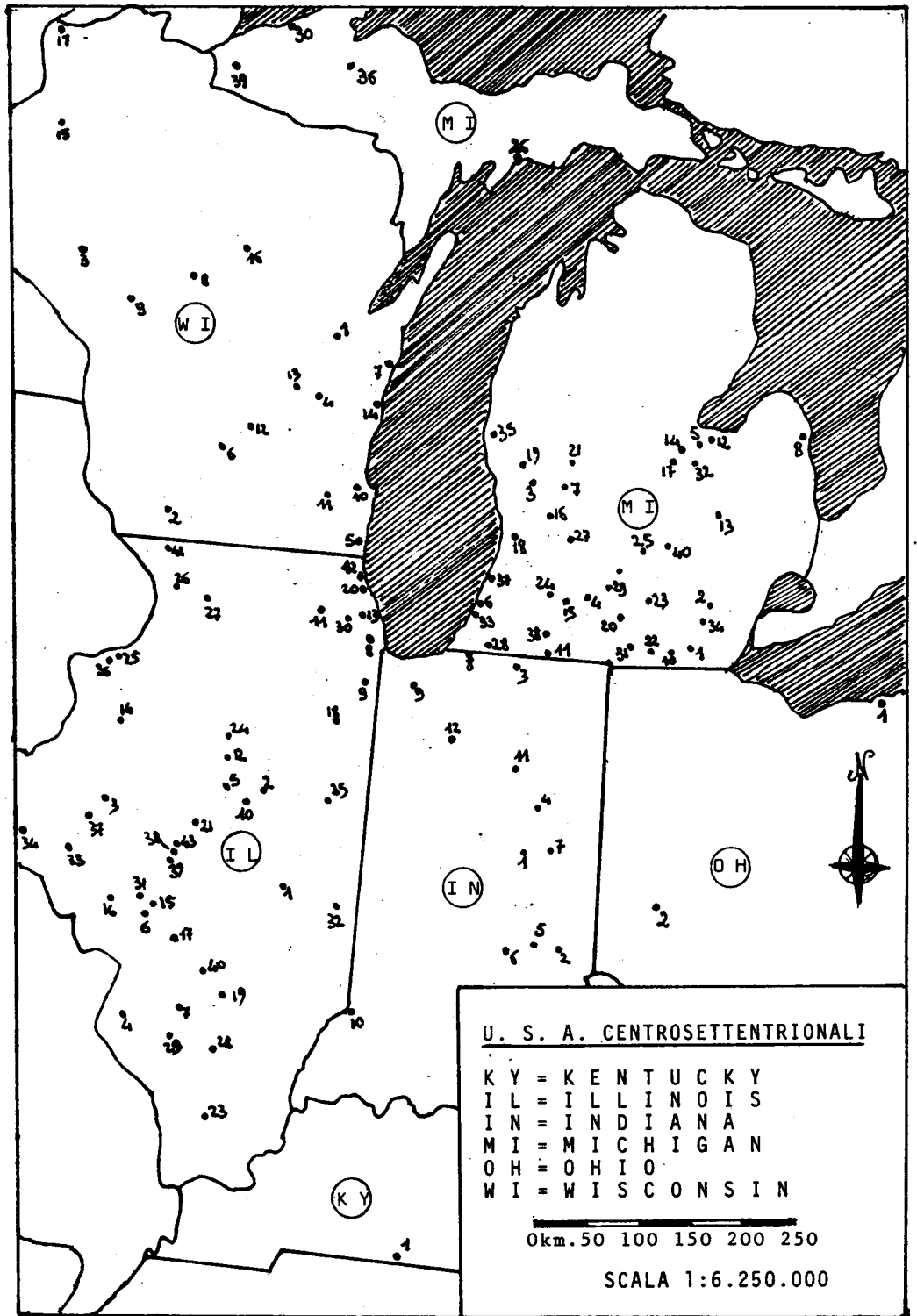
(UFO Commentary vol.2 n.4 p.8; MUFOB 5:5 p.52)

1897.04.20/18.00-Homan (AR). Un notissimo conduttore di treni, il



Il disegno eseguito da Hooton.

capitano Hooton, sente il suono d'un motore a vapore e trova l'aeronave in una radura. Discute per un po' con un uomo a bordo, che porta degli occhiali scuri e che gli spiega il funzionamento dell'aeronave, basato sull'aria compressa. Hooton osserva la macchina con molta attenzione e ne fa un disegno particolareggiato. (FSR agosto 66 p.14 e dicembre 67 p.27; Farish su



LOCALITA' DELLA CARTINA "USA CENTROSETTENTRIONALI" DI PAG. 14

ILLINOIS (IL)

1:Arcola  
2:Arrowsmith  
3:Astoria  
4:Belleville  
5:Bloomington  
6:Carlinville  
7:Carlyle  
8:Chicago  
9:Chicago Heights  
10:Downs  
11:Elgin  
12:El Paso  
13:Evanston  
14:Galesburg  
15:Girard  
16:Greenville  
17:Hillsboro  
18:Kankakee  
19:Kinmundy  
20:Lake Forest  
21:Lincoln  
22:Lisle  
23:Marion  
24:Minonk  
25:Moline  
26:Mount Carroll  
27:Mount Morris  
28:Mount Vernon  
29:Nashville  
30:Niles  
31:Nilwood  
32:Paris  
33:Perry  
34:Quincy  
35:Rankin  
36:Rock Island  
37:Rushville  
38:Sherman  
39:Springfield  
40:Vandalia

41:Warren  
42:Waukegan  
43:Williamsville

INDIANA (IN)

1:Anderson  
2:Batesville  
3:Elkhart  
4:Gas City  
5:Greensburg  
6:Hope  
7:Muncie  
8:New Carlisle  
9:Valparaiso  
10:Vincennes  
11:Wabash  
12:Winamac

KENTUCKY (KY)

1:Adairville

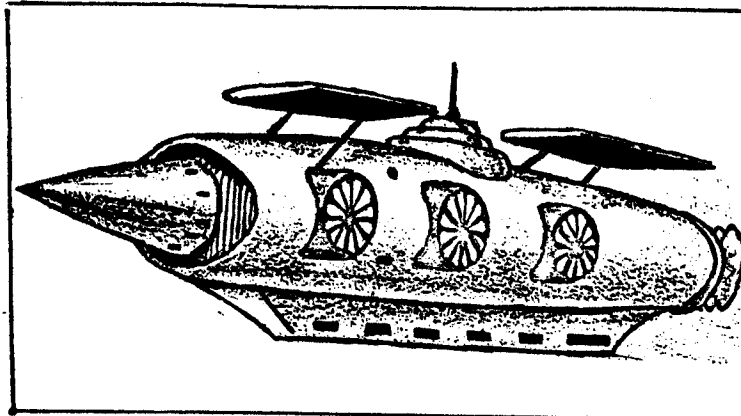
MICHIGAN (MI)

1:Adrian  
2:Ann Arbor  
3:Bailey  
4:Battle Creek  
5:Bay City  
6:Benton Harbor  
7:Cedar Springs  
8:Charleston  
9:Charlotte  
10:Clayton  
11:Constantine  
12:Essexville  
13:Flint  
14:Freeland  
15:Galesburg  
16:Grand Rapids  
17:Hemlock  
18:Holland  
19:Holton

20:Homer  
21:Howard City  
22:Hudson  
23:Jackson  
24:Kalamazoo  
25:Lansing  
26:Manistique  
27:Middleville  
28:Niles  
29:Olivet  
30:Ontonagon  
31:Pittsford  
32:Saginaw  
33:Saint Joseph  
34:Saline  
35:Shelby  
36:Sidaw  
37:South Haven  
38:Three Rivers  
39:Wakefield  
40:Williamston

WISCONSIN (WI)

1:Appleton  
2:Darlington  
3:Eau Claire  
4:Fond du Lac  
5:Kenosha  
6:Lodi  
7:Manitowoc  
8:Marshfield  
9:Merrillan  
10:Milwaukee  
11:Palmyra  
12:Rio  
13:Ripon  
14:Sheboygan  
15:Spooner  
16:Wausau  
17:West Superior



Ricostruzione grafica di Hal Crawford, ricavata dallo schizzo di Hooton (caso del 20.4.1897 in località Homan, nello stato dell'Arkansas) riprodotto alla pagina 13 insieme al resoconto dell'avvistamento.

"The Allende Letters", p.24; Magonia n.25, MUFOB 5:5 p.53; "Operazione Cavallo di Troia", p.88; Pinotti "La congiura del silenzio", p.30)

1897.04.20/22.00-Uvalde (TX). Lo sceriffo locale vede una luce brillante e sente delle strane voci nel suo cortile. Uscito di casa, vi trova un'aeronave e tre uomini, uno dei quali dice di chiamarsi Wilson e di essere di Goshen (nello stato di New York) e che stanno facendo un volo di prova segreto. Sostiene di conoscere un residente locale, cui raccomanda di fare i suoi saluti. I tre prendono dell'acqua dall'idrante dello sceriffo e risalgono a bordo, mettendo in moto le "grandi ali e pinne" laterali dell'apparecchio, ripartendo.

(UFO Commentary 2:4 p.9; MUFOB 5:5 p.53)

1897.04.21/01.00-Harrisburg (AR). Un ex-senatore del posto viene svegliato da un rumore insolito ed osserva l'aeronave che atterra nel suo campo, mantenendosi a un metro da terra. A bordo ci sono due giovani, una donna ed un anziano signore con basette lunghissime che gli penzolano sul colletto, due occhi nerissimi ed un'espressione ferma e sicura, che dopo essersi rifornito d'acqua racconta al testimone come suo zio, 26 anni prima, abbia fatto un'invenzione che permette d'annullare la forza di gravità, e che egli utilizza per l'aeronave, che egli spera di perfezionare per andare su Marte. A bordo ha anche un cannone ed una mitragliatrice che sparerebbe l'incredibile quantità di 63000 colpi al minuto. Sostiene anche che era sua intenzione andare a Cuba in favore degli insorti, ma che ora vuole accorrere in Turchia in aiuto degli Armeni. Dopo aver informato il senatore che andando "molto lentamente" l'aeronave ha impiegato meno di un'ora a percorrere il tragitto Dallas-Harrisburg (a 360 km di distanza), l'uomo invita il testimone a fare un giro, ma questi non accetta e l'aeronave s'allontana scomparendo in pochi secondi.

(FSR agosto 67, p.22; MUFOB 5:5 p.53; "Operazione Cavallo di Troia", p.87)

1897.04.22/23.30-Rockland (TX). Un contadino sente il suo cane abbaiare furiosamente e ode un sibilo che aumenta gradatamente. Esce ed osserva un'aeronave cilindrica con ali laterali di varie grandezze e forme, con luci luminosissime. L'oggetto si ferma im mobile a circa 5 metri da terra, poi atterra. Il testimone incontra il pilota, un uomo normalissimo che dice di chiamarsi Smith, che gli chiede dell'olio lubrificante ed altre cosette pagandolo con un biglietto da 10 dollari. Smith non gli permette d'avvicinarsi all'aeronave, e alla domanda "da dove venite e dove andate" risponde "da ogni luogo, ma saremo in Grecia dopodomani". Risalito a bordo l'uomo, l'oggetto riparte di colpo scomparendo in un attimo. (FSR agosto 67 p.23; Magonia n.26; MUFOB 5:5 p.53; Keel "Operazione cavallo di Troia, p.86; "La congiura del silenzio, p. 30; Arcani n.16 p.30)

1897.04.22/24.00-Josserand (TX). Un fattore osserva un'aeronave attarrare nel suo campo, e trova 2 uomini dell'equipaggio con dei secchi in mano che gli chiedono il permesso di prender dell'acqua dal suo pozzo. Accontentatili, il testimone li accompagna al loro velivolo e discute con altri 6 membri dell'equipaggio, che gli rivelano che la macchina è fatta d'un materiale speciale che "sta su in aria da solo", e che la forza motrice è fornita dall'elettricità. Gli vien detto che ci sono 5 aeronavi, costruite in un villaggio dell'Iowa, e che presto la notizia verrà resa pubblica. (FSR agosto 67 p.23; MUFOB 5:5 p.53; Magonia n.27; "Operazione cavallo di Troia" p.86; "La congiura del silenzio", p.30)

1897.04.23/ ? . ?-Texarkana (AR). Vicino al Mc Kinney Bayou, un giudice osserva un'aeronave d'alluminio ancorata al suolo, con a bordo 3 uomini che parlano una lingua incomprensibile e sembrano "giapponesi", i quali a gesti lo invitano a bordo e gli mostrano il funzionamento d'una pompa che fa alzare e abbassare l'aeronave a seconda che introduca od estragga un "gas" da un serbatoio. ("Allende Letters", p.25; Magonia n.28; MUFOB 5:5 p.53; "Operazione cavallo di Troia" p.80)

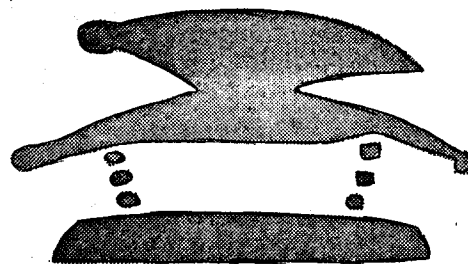
1897.04.25/ ? . ?-Merkel (TX). Alcune persone di ritorno dalla chiesa osservano un'aeronave volare a bassa quota con un'ancora appesa ad un lungo cavo [ancore penzolanti compaiono anche in altri casi: a Sioux City (IA) il 26(?)marzo, a Texarkana il 23 aprile e ad Holton (MI) il 29 aprile]. L'ancora s'impiglia nei binari della ferrovia, e l'aeronave si ferma di colpo. Benché non si riesca a distinguerne la forma, si vedono molte finestre illuminate ed un faro posto sulla prua. Dopo 10 minuti un uomo di piccola statura con una tuta azzurra addosso scende lungo il cavo e lo taglia, lasciando l'ancora in mano alla gente. (FSR ottobre 66 p.10 e febbraio 67 p.24; Steiger & Whritenour "Flying Saucers are Hostile", p.12; Flying Saucers n.51 p.12; Magonia n.29; MUFOB 5:5 p. 53; Lorenzen "UFOs: the Whole Story", p.13)

1897.04.27/02.00-Dayton (OH). Due persone osservano l'apparizione d'un enorme oggetto sigariforme sotto il quale è appesa "una cesta" illuminata dentro cui si vedono chiaramente 3 occupanti dall'aspetto umano. (FSR febbraio 67 p.26; MUFOB 5:5 p.54)

1897.05.06/ ?. ?- Hot Springs (AR). Due poliziotti osservano una luce brillante in cielo che atterra dietro una collina. Arrivati ad una certa distanza, i cavalli dei due si rifiutano di proseguire, ed i due vedono tre persone con delle lanterne vicino ad un'aeronave, sigariforme e lunga un 20 metri. Uno dei tre, giovane, raccoglie l'acqua piovana in un sacco; il più anziano, con barba e basette lunghe, si fa avanti e discute con i poliziotti, invitandoli a salire a bordo per farsi portare dove non piova; la terza persona è una donna, che si tiene in disparte e al buio, ed ha un ombrello aperto. L'anziano spiega che la luce dell'aeronave è stata diminuita dopo l'atterraggio perché essendo alimentata dal motore consuma troppa energia. Dopo aver fatto un giro i due tornano e non trovano più nessuno. (FSR agosto 66 p.15; Magonia n.31; MUFOB 5:5 p.54; "Operazione cavallo di Troia" p.81; Arcani n.16 p.3)

1897.05.06/22.30-Matteawan (NY). Un oggetto con fari bianchi e verdi che spazzano il cielo è osservato a 45° sull'orizzonte. Vengono visti 2 o 3 occupanti, tra cui un ragazzo che getta delle ceneri calde fuori bordo. Quando l'oggetto è illuminato dai fari non getta alcuna ombra. (UFO Commentary 2:3 p.8; MUFOB 5:5 p.54)

Dalla presente rassegna di casi relativi all'ondata d'avvistamenti di "aeronavi" con umanoidi nel 1897 sono stati esclusi alcuni casi, tra i quali i due più famosi dell'aeronave precipitata ad Aurora il 17/4 e del rapimento della vacca di Hamilton a Le Roy il 19/4, perché si sono rivelati falsi. Questi casi sono trattati separatamente su questo stesso numero speciale.



Altri due disegni di "aeronavi" tratti da giornali dell'aprile 1897. Le due immagini si riferiscono ad avvistamenti avvenuti rispettivamente a Nashville (AR) e ad Holland (MI).

CLYPEUS - RICERCHE

# RIPOSI IN PACE

La ballata di un ufonauta  
sepolto in un cimitero texano

Dal Dallas Morning News del 19 aprile 1897:

"Aurora, contea di Wise, 17 aprile -

Verso le sei di questa mattina, alcuni fra i più mattinieri abitanti di Aurora sono rimasti allibiti all'apparizione della misteriosa aeronave che da qualche settimana viene regolarmente avvistata nei cieli del Texas. L'ordigno viaggiava in direzione nord ed era più vicino alla superficie terrestre di quanto fosse mai avvenuto in precedenza. Evidentemente una parte della complessa macchina doveva essere in avaria perché non faceva più di 10-12 miglia orarie e perdeva quota gradatamente. Dopo aver oltrepassato in diagonale lo spiazzo dove di solito si tiene la fiera del bestiame, raggiunto il limite nord della città, è precipitata sul mulino a vento del giudice Proctor. Nella terrificante esplosione che è seguita tutto è andato in frantumi. I rottami del velivolo erano sparsi in un raggio di due o tre ettari. Il mulino a vento del giudice è andato completamente distrutto, il serbatoio dell'acqua è sparito e nulla resta del bel giardino che c'era intorno. Sembra che a bordo dell'aeronave ci fosse un solo essere. Malgrado i suoi resti fossero orrendamente dilaniati, da quanto s'è potuto raccogliere sembra chiaro che non si trattava d'un abitante di questo mondo. Il signor T. J. Weems, telegrafista del governo degli Stati Uniti distaccato in questa città, ed una vera autorità in campo d'astronomia, ha dichiarato che per conto suo si tratta d'un abitante di Marte. Alcuni fogli rinvenuti sul luogo della sciagura, probabilmente quanto resta del giornale di bordo, sono pieni di geroglifici indecifrabili. L'aeronave, come s'è detto, è andata totalmente distrutta ed è impossibile formulare una qualsiasi teoria sulla sua costruzione o sul segreto della sua forza motrice. Certamente era costruita con un metallo sconosciuto, una specie di lega d'alluminio ed argento, e si presume dovesse pesare diverse tonnellate. Oggi la città è piena di curiosi giunti da ogni parte per vedere il luogo del disastro. I resti del pilota saranno seppelliti a mezzogiorno nel cimitero di Aurora. Firmato S. E. Haydon".

Dopo essere rimasto sepolto negli archivi del Dallas Morning News per 70 anni, questo articolo venne riscoperto nel 1966 dal dottor Donald Hanlon, durante uno studio compiuto in collaborazione col dottor Jacques Vallée sul "flap" d'aeronavi abbattute-



si sul Texas nell'aprile del 1897. Il dottor Hanlon lo ripropose all'attenzione del pubblico insieme ad altri ritagli dello stesso periodo in un suo articolo sulla Flying Saucer Review.<sup>2</sup>

Dato il carattere altamente insolito del rapporto, Hanlon e Vallée informarono della cosa il dottor Hynek, allora consulente sugli UFO per l'aviazione statunitense. Il dottor Hynek si prestò gentilmente, e fece richiesta di informazioni ad alcuni studiosi di storia della contea di Wise, i quali risposero che si trattava d'uno scherzo.

Per maggior sicurezza, Hynek incaricò un suo amico, il dottor Alfred Kraus (allora direttore del Kilgore Research Institute all'Università Statale del Texas Occidentale) di compiere un'investigazione sul posto.

Il dottor Kraus si recò innanzi tutto a Dallas, alla sede del Morning News, per verificare l'esattezza delle informazioni ricevute sull'articolo, poi si spostò a Decatur, presso la Wise County Historical Society, e successivamente si recò per ben due volte ad Aurora, dove interrogò gli abitanti del posto circa il presunto avvenimento. Ecco i risultati della sua ricerca.

Nella seconda metà del secolo scorso, Aurora era la città più importante della contea. Situata sull'Old Chisolm Trail (una delle piste per carovane che portavano in California), era una tappa fissa dei convogli diretti ad ovest, capoluogo della contea e sede del tribunale (il giudice Proctor citato nell'articolo era il giudice di pace della Wise County). C'erano ben 15 saloons e la fiera di bestiame era una delle più importanti del Texas.

Nel 1897, la città si trovava però in grossi guai. Un'epidemia di febbre tifoidea aveva decimato la popolazione. Moltissimi altri abitanti abbandonarono Aurora a causa del fallimento delle coltivazioni locali di cotone, ed il colpo di grazia venne quando la città venne "saltata" nel progetto di costruzione della ferrovia. Queste tre cause combinate trasformarono una fiorente metropoli in una città-fantasma nel giro di un anno.

L'Haydon che inviò il "pezzo" al Morning News era un commerciante di cotone, che oltre ad avere fama di burlone era uno stringer cioè uno dei corrispondenti locali che procurano notizie fresche ai grossi giornali di città; egli si trovava nei guai, come tutti, e cercò di fare qualcosa per ridare un po' di vita ad Aurora e farne un'attrazione turistica. L'idea gli venne dai numerosi avvistamenti d'"aeronavi" che in quei giorni venivano riportati con grande enfasi su tutti i giornali.

Il giornalista Frank Tolbert scoprì che il T.J. Weems dell'articolo era in realtà il maniscalco di Aurora, ed il suo collega Jerry Flemmons venne a sapere che qualche anno prima un anziano telegrafista aveva confessato che la storia era stata inventata dal Weems mentre si trovava nell'Iowa, e che non aveva alcuna base reale.

Giunto ad Aurora, il dottor Kraus si fermò ad interrogare il

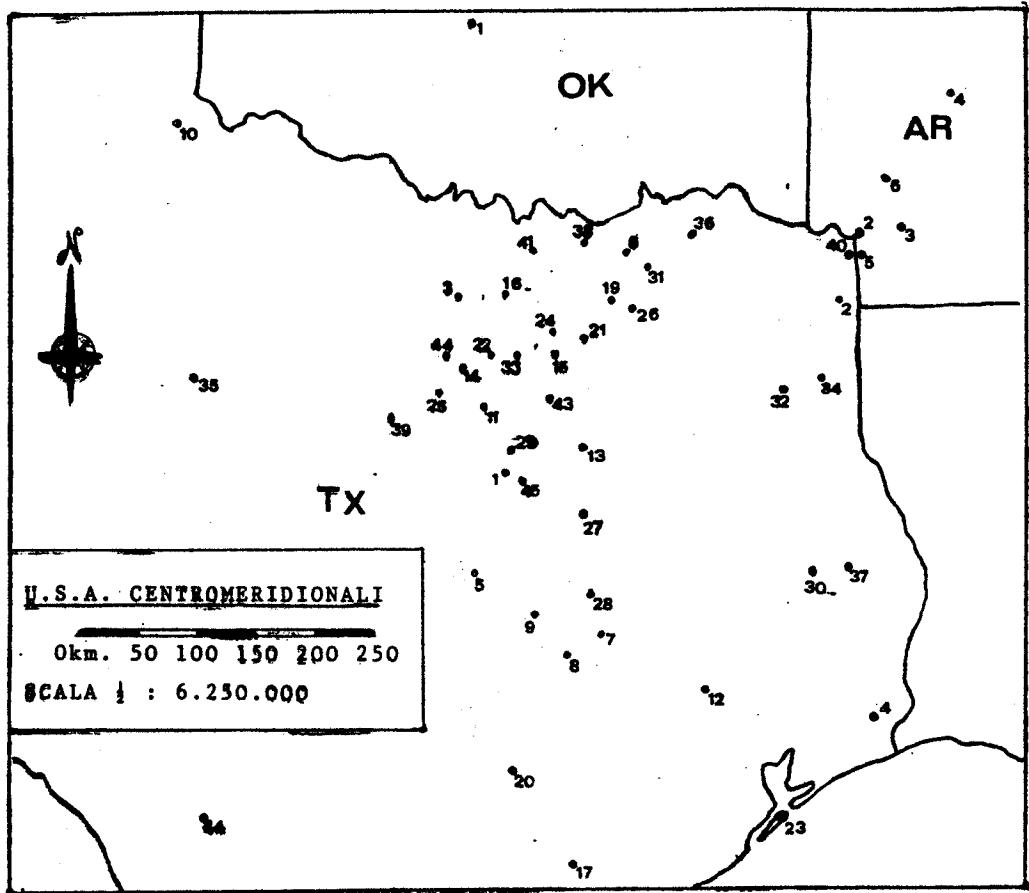
proprietario dell'unica stazione di servizio, il signor Oates, il quale non volle né confermare né smentire l'autenticità della storia e consigliò a Kraus d'andare a parlare con Oscar Lowry. Quest'ultimo, che aveva 11 anni al tempo dell'incidente, gli raccontò che gli avevano già fatto visita almeno venti persone per l'affare dell'aeronave, ed un giornalista gli aveva perfino offerto una grossa somma di denaro per confermare l'autenticità del racconto. Ma Lowry sostenne anche con Kraus che era tutta una montatura, che non esisteva nessun mulino a vento sul terreno del giudice Proctor, e che in ogni caso, per verificare che il "pilota" non era seppellito ad Aurora bastava controllare i registri del camposanto, un Cimitero Massonico, che dimostravano come non ci fossero tombe di cui non si conoscesse l'inquilino; così come gli archivi storici della contea (che pure registrarono dettagliatamente tutti gli avvenimenti, dalla febbre tifoidea al fallimento della piantagione all'esclusione dal tracciato ferroviario) non registravano un avvenimento storico di portata così notevole come la caduta d'un'aeronave, fatto di portata inaudita per quei tempi, in cui non esistevano aeronavi.

Per maggior sicurezza, Kraus tornò una seconda volta ad Aurora con un metal detector, e passò al setaccio tutta l'ex-proprietà del giudice Proctor ed il cimitero, senza trovare nulla d'interessante (a parte alcuni anelli per briglie, cornici di foto da lapide ed una targa d'auto).

Quindi, comunicò ad Hynek i risultati della sua indagine, ed Hynek informò Hanlon e Vallée, che diramarono subito la notizia, tanto è vero che il caso non venne incluso nel catalogo d'atterraggi che Vallée inserì come appendice del suo libro "Passport to Magonia".<sup>3</sup>

Nel gennaio del '72, un ufologo inglese, Johannes Dettwiler, scrisse al municipio d'Aurora chiedendo che c'era di vero nella storia, che cosa restava della tomba e che ricerche erano state fatte. La risposta ricevuta diceva che il caso era senza ombra di dubbio un falso, che non c'era nessuna prova o nessun indizio che fornisse conferma della storia, che tutti i cittadini del posto vivi al tempo del presunto fatto negavano che la cosa avesse alcun fondamento di verità. Quanto alle ricerche sul posto, la lettera affermava che "il terreno sul quale si suppone che sia caduta l'aeronave è stato scavato, setacciato ed esaminato con rilevatori di metalli tante di quelle volte che se ci fosse stato un qualche strano frammento (come si rileva dall'articolo di Haydon) sarebbe già stato trovato. E invece niente. Ma voi potreste chiedervi: 'perché tanto rumore, se non è accaduto nulla?'. E vi rispondiamo che tutti gli indizi sembrano indicare che la notizia non fu che uno scherzo dovuto alla noia degli impiegati d'un ufficio telegrafico qui vicino".<sup>4</sup>

Nulla da eccepire. La storia era chiusa e definitiva. Se non che, nella primavera del '73, la storia risorse su tutti i gior-



**ARKANSAS (AR)**

- 1:Harrisburg
- 2:Homen
- 3:Hope
- 4:Hot Springs
- 5:Mc Kinney Bayou
- 6:Nashville

**OKLAHOMA (OK)**

- 1:Norman

**TEXAS (TX)**

- 1:Aquila
- 2:Atlanta
- 3:Aurora
- 4:Beaumont
- 5:Belton
- 6:Bonham
- 7:Bryan

- 8:Caldwell
- 9:Cameron
- 10:Childress
- 11:Cleburne
- 12:Conroe
- 13:Corsicana
- 14:Cresson
- 15:Dallas
- 16:Denton
- 17:Edna
- 18:El Paso
- 19:Farmersville
- 20:Flatonia
- 21:Forney
- 22:Fort Worth
- 23:Galveston
- 24:Garland
- 25:Granbury
- 26:Greenville

- 27:Groesbeck
- 28:Hearne
- 29:Hillsboro
- 30:Jossierand
- 31:Ladonia
- 32:Longview
- 33:Mansfield
- 34:Marshall
- 35:Merkel
- 36:Paris
- 37:Rockland
- 38:Sherman
- 39:Stephenville
- 40:Texarkana
- 41:Tioga
- 42:Uvalde
- 43:Waxahachie
- 44:Weatherford
- 45:West

nali. Ecco come avvenne.

Nel maggio di quell'anno, un noto ufologo americano (di cui non riportiamo il nome per non farne una questione personale) che ha la reputazione d'essere un "tafano" che si sposta qua e là a seconda dell'attività degli UFO, ritirò in ballo la storia, e man mano che i mass-media (in periodo di "magra") cominciarono a dar gli credito, altri improvvisati investigatori saltarono sul suo carro e piombarono ad Aurora. Fra loro era un giornalista che in dossava una giacca su cui era cucito il simbolo della NASA, e così lui fece di tutto per farsi credere uno dell'ente spaziale.

Questo signore, fu proprio lui a saltar su con una manciata di frammenti metallici che sosteneva d'aver trovato sul "luogo dell'incidente" e che si affrettò a spedire presso "un laboratorio canadese" per farli analizzare, temendo che "le autorità potessero confiscarli". Un pezzetto venne comunque consegnato al dottor Tom Gray, dell'Università del Texas Settentrionale, il quale venne successivamente citato come "sorpreso" dalle "insolite qualità" dei frammenti d'alluminio consegnatigli, i quali erano in "perfetto stato di conservazione, malleabili, lucidi e non magnetizzati".

Come primo risultato, il "colpo"giornalistico di questo giornalista, Bill Case, fece salire alle stelle le vendite del suo giornale, il Dallas Herald Times. Quando poi vennero "scoperti" alcuni anziani del luogo che, pur non avendo visto niente, ricordavano d'aver "sentito raccontare la storia" dai loro genitori, si raggiunse l'acme, e due organizzazioni ufologiche fecero ufficialmente richiesta di poter disseppellire l'"extraterrestre" dalla sua tomba, identificata con un metal detector e con l'aiuto dei "testimoni".

La cosa rimbalzò naturalmente sui giornali di tutto il mondo. In Italia, oltre ai resoconti dei quotidiani, è da segnalare l'indagine svolta ad Aurora da Duilio Pallottelli per "l'Europeo".<sup>6</sup> Descrizioni incomplete del caso apparvero sia sul "Giornale dei Misteri"<sup>6</sup> che su "gli Arcani"<sup>7</sup>, entrambe con la data erroneamente posticipata al 19 aprile, data d'edizione del Morning News.

Una breve "controinchiesta" dell'APRO<sup>8</sup> rivelò però ben presto che la lega d'alluminio trovata sul posto era normalissima in tutto e per tutto, eccetto che nel suo "perfetto stato di conservazione", che indicava come il frammento dovesse risalire a non più d'un anno prima. Ricordiamoci poi delle ricerche svolte col metal detector dal dottor Kraus nel '66 e di quelle anonime che almeno fino al '72 non avevano dato alcun frutto. Sul posto non c'erano frammenti metallici. Da dove veniva dunque questo?

Quanto ai tre "testimoni", l'86enne Charlie Stevens si comportò in modo tale da far sospettare della sua salute mentale, aggredendo letteralmente il cronista dell'"Europeo", che mise in dubbio la veridicità del fatto; la 91enne Mary Evans (che vive in una catapecchia con la figlia ed il genero, la cui unica occupazione è vuotare bottiglie di birra) è "la più miserabile del paes

se" e parla dietro compenso d'"un paio di dollari"; il 98enne G. C. Curley di Lewisville si ricorda solo che dei suoi amici andarono ad Aurora dopo aver letto i giornali e ritornarono ripetendone il racconto parola per parola.

Inoltre, moltissimi anziani del paese si rifiutano di credere alla storia, sostenendo che si tratta d'una montatura. Consigliamo poi di leggere l'articolo sull'"Europeo", considerando attentamente i seguenti punti: le reticenze degli abitanti d'Aurora ed il "muro d'impenetrabile silenzio" che si leva quando si cerca d'approfondire troppo; lo sforzo di Bill Case di "dimostrare" la verità della storia; il "campanello d'allarme" che spinge Palottelli a non fidarsi di Case e a recarsi sul posto.

Tra l'altro è ancora da notare che la misteriosa "lapide" scoperta in quei giorni, con un'iscrizione triangolare sopra sparisce quando si cerca di darci un'occhiata, e si viene poi a sapere che l'ha presa lo sceriffo (il cui atteggiamento è alquanto sospetto) "per proteggerla, nell'interesse della scienza".

Per di più, tornando ai "testimoni", sia lo Stevens che la Evans dichiararono di poter indicare la "tomba dello spaziale", e lo fecero, ma indicando ciascuno una tomba diversa.

Tutto parrebbe quadrare allora. Era effettivamente uno scherzo di Haydon. Ma perché riaprire la polemica? Perché "trovare" tutti questi "testimoni", e tutte le "prove materiali"? E perché proprio all'inizio del 1973? Forse possiamo trovare una risposta, il movente, cercando come nei gialli "cui prodest"?

Abbiamo già visto le condizioni a cui si ridusse Aurora verso la fine del secolo, nonostante la trovata di Haydon. La cittadina sparì letteralmente dalle carte geografiche (non compare neppure sulla dettagliatissima carta stradale della Rand Mc Nally del 1967), e coi suoi 200 abitanti questa fiorente metropoli non era che una frazione della vicina città di Rhome. Alla fine del '72 però Aurora è stata reincorporata come comune degli USA. Chi può aver avuto interesse a ridestare interesse per Aurora (dopo aver "preparato" il terreno), facendone un'attrazione turistica? La storia si ripete. Ciò che non riuscì a fare Haydon...

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## NOTE

1. "Cercando di capire perché proprio Marte venne scelto come luogo d'origine, dobbiamo considerare il clima sociale di quei giorni, in cui stavano progredendo le ricerche telescopiche di sir Percivall Lovell, il più noto astronomo del tempo, il quale cercava di trovare vita intelligente su Marte. Fra il pubblico l'astronomia era uno degli hobby più diffusi, ed il mistero più affascinante era certo quello della presenza o meno di vita sul nostro vicino. Weems, "vera autorità in fatto d'astronomia", doveva essere appunto un astronomo dilattante, ed era quindi certo a conoscenza delle problematiche "marziane". Anche durante il flap

**OLYPEUS**

**2/3**

# UFO AND FORTTEAN PHENOMENA

Me - Ju 77

INTERNATIONAL FLYING SAUCER NEWS · PUBLISHED BY GIANNI BETTINO · CASELLA POSTALE 804 · TORINO

**LE  
MISTERIOSE  
«AERONAVI»  
DEL  
1897**



**I  
FANTOMATICI  
«PIATTI  
VOLANTI»  
DEL  
1947**

"CLYPEUS", N° 4, 1.977

LUGLIO - AGOSTO 1.977

1.896-97

# OSSERVATORIO

## ancora sulle aeronavi

Nella rubrica di *Casistica antica* apparsa sull'*UFO Phenomena* n°2/3, nella rassegna di atterraggi delle "aeronavi" del 1897, in data 17 aprile si segnalavano tre casi texani (avvenuti rispettivamente a Greenville, Stephenville e Waxahachie) di cui si sapeva solo che i testimoni avevano parlato con gli occupanti della "nave aerea", senza ulteriori particolari.

L'amico Ignacio Darnaude Rojas-Marcos di Siviglia ci ha gentilmente inviato foto copie del *Dallas Morning News* del 19 aprile 1897, che sotto un unico titolo di sca tola ("*La grande meraviglia aerea. O si tratta di realtà o Anania e Saffira erano semplici dilettanti. L'effetto dell'acqua del torrente Chambers. Trovata a terra a Stephenville e Waxahachie ed esplosa a Decatur*") narra le tre storie insieme a quella dell'incidente di Aurora, di cui abbiamo già discusso nel numero scorso. Riportiamo quindi in sintesi i tre casi per completare la rassegna, e ringraziamo l'amico Darnaude per la sempre attivissima collaborazione.

Nelle prime ore della mattinata, un noto agricoltore si imbatte (nei dintorni di Stephenville) nell'aeronave a terra e in due uomini (un ingegnere ed un pilota) che ne costituiscono l'equipaggio, costretti ad atterrare per fare alcune riparazioni. Il testimone corre in città e torna sul posto accompagnato da alcune decine di persone fra cui giudici, giornalisti, ufficiali dell'esercito, avvocati e tutti i notabili locali. Tutti hanno modo d'ammirare l'apparecchio, che consiste d'un corpo cilindrico sigariforme (arrotondato alle estremità) lungo 20 metri, a cui sono attaccate due immense ali, mentre la forza motrice è fornita da due enormi "ruote da mulino" metalliche disposte alle estremità dell'aeronave, propulsa da un immenso motore elettrico che trae energia da batterie situate a bordo. I due occupanti danno i loro nomi e dicono d'essere in giro di prova sull'invenzione del secolo, finanziata da alcuni industriali di New York. Non permettono a nessuno di esaminare la "nave" ma promettono che la notizia sarà data ufficialmente presto. Finite le riparazioni, ripartono sotto gli occhi della folla.

Poco dopo la mezzanotte, il corrispondente locale del *Dallas News* sta passeggiando in un campo vicino a Greenville quando vede una luce brillante davanti a sé. Vorrebbe fuggire ma le gambe non si muovono. La luce si spegne e l'uomo vede un immenso "sigaro" a terra e tre uomini accanto ad esso, uno dei quali sta eseguendo delle riparazioni, mentre gli altri due chiamano l'involontario testimone e lo pregano di imbucare per loro delle lettere. I tre dicono di essere l'inventore dell'aeronave e due suoi aiutanti e assistenti. Da parecchi anni lavorano alla macchina aerea in una cittadina vicino a New York, e due settimane prima sono partiti per un giro. Vedendo che l'apparecchio andava bene, hanno deciso di prolungare il viaggio. Promettendo che ben presto si saprà tutto della sua invenzione, l'inventore manifesta la necessità di fare piccole modifiche e spiega che la forza motrice è data dall'elettricità, che serve anche per le luci. La "nave" è lunga circa 25 metri e consiste d'un corpo centrale sigariforme lungo 20 metri che ha in punta una grande ruota, e dietro una coda come quella dei pesci". Secondo l'inventore, una volta in volo il vento agisce sulla ruota come nei mulini e questo basta a tenerla su il tutto, con un minimo d'energia per la propulsione. Promettendo all'uomo di tornare e di portarlo a fare un viaggio in Sudamerica, i tre risalgono a bordo e con un lampo di luce ed un ronzio l'aeronave si innalza e si allontana.

Verso le 17:30 o le 18, un giudice di Waxahachie ed un amico stanno tornando da pescare sul Chambers Creek quando si imbattono in "una strana macchina" ed in "cinque uomini vestiti in modo curioso" che (sdraiati su alcune pelli) fumano la pipa. Sorpresi dall'arrivo dei due pescatori, i cinque sembrano un po' sconcertati ma poi li invitano ad unirsi a loro e ad esaminare l'aeronave, "simile ad un sigaro messicano" lungo 11 metri e largo cinque al centro, con tre paia di ali "come quelle degli uccelli", rigate e ricoperte. Un motore le fa sbattere propellendo il tutto, ed un timone sia verticale sia orizzontale permette di manovrare. L'interno dell'aeronave è diviso in stanze che fungono da magazzino, cucina, eccetera. La velocità massima è di 250 miglia orarie e quella di crociera si aggira sulle 150. Dopo aver offerto agli inattesi ospiti delle pipe e del tabacco, il capo dei piloti racconta che loro vengono da una terra che si trova al di là del Polo Nord, resa fertile e rigogliosa dalla Corrente del Golfo. Le dieci tribù perdute di Israele vi erano finite tentando d'attraversare lo stretto di Bering, e stanziatesi là avevano dato vita ad una fiorente comunità basata sull'uso del vapore acqueo e della combustione dell'ossigeno estratto elettroliticamente dall'acqua ghiacciata. Varie spedizioni (fallite) di anglosassoni diretti al Polo (sir Hugh Willoughby nel 1543, sir John Franklin nel 1546, eccetera) furono i soli loro contatti col mondo. Non essendoci legno per costruire navi o ferrovie, questa gente si era dedicata alla navigazione aerea. Il 1° gennaio 1897 la Società Storica del Polo Nord decise di inviare aeronavi sul resto del mondo e vennero costruite appositamente venti aeronavi per equipaggi di cinque uomini. Il 1° marzo dieci aeronavi partirono per l'Europa e altre dieci per gli Stati Uniti. Le dieci aeronavi degli USA si sarebbero incontrate a Nashville, nel Tennessee, il 18 giugno per partecipare all'Esposizione del Centenario, dove sarebbero state fatte visitare gratuitamente. Dopo aver stretto la mano ai due increduli americani, i cinque risalgono a bordo e ripartono.





# SGUALDRINELLE, MOSTRICIATTOLI, PAGLIACCI...

di Elio Bellangero

*Charles Hoy Fort, una singolare figura di ricercatore — Tra una pioggia di rane e un globo di fuoco, 25.000 sberleffi al dogma — Un'umanità tra reale e irreale, una scienza che non è conoscenza — Mondi alieni, piani diversi di esistenza e storie del più remoto passato.*

New York City, Bronx, primi anni del secolo.

Un ignoto giornalista, Charles Hoy Fort, nato il 9 agosto 1874 ad Albany, nello stato di New York, passa le sue giornate consultando alla Biblioteca Municipale giornali e riviste di tutto il mondo.

Il suo scopo: raccogliere testimonianze su fatti realmente accaduti, documentati ma «inspiegabili».

Pioggia di rame a Birmingham il 30 giugno 1892. Eseri volanti nel cielo di Palermo il 30 novembre 1880. Impronte di un «puledro a una zampa sola» scoperte nel Devonshire l'8 febbraio 1855. Una massa gelatinosa cade dal cielo a Gotha, in Germania, il 6 settembre 1835. Un oggetto a forma di campana composto da metallo sconosciuto ritrovato in un blocco di roccia a Dorchester, Massachussets, il 1° giugno 1851.

E così via. Una sfilata di dati riguardanti ogni categoria dell'inverosimile, ogni apertura, più o meno grande, sulla possibile esistenza di «altre realtà».

Fort si dedica anima e corpo a quella che vive come una missione entusiasmante, quasi profetica: aprire una spaccatura nel mondo della Scienza, introducendo dati che distruggano la presuntuosa sicurezza del sistema concettuale, storico, fisico, filosofico, accettabile.

Egli considera ogni evento, ogni pensiero, ogni azione come tentativi di «penetrare un'esistenza reale», un'esistenza nella quale gli schemi della conoscenza ufficiale non esistono e sono soppiantati da una visione globale del creato.

«Tutto è in tutto», l'Universo di Fort sta in un granello di sabbia. La sua attenzione è rivolta in particolare al cielo.

Dal cielo cade di tutto: seta, vermi, sangue, palle di ferro, fango, ascie di giada, blocchi di ghiaccio, pietre, pesci, globi di fuoco, sostanze chimiche, vegetali, relitti di legno e altre centinaia di cose impensabili precipitano in varie parti della Terra.

Piove rosso, giallo, nero, color lavanda.

Grandina azzurro, arancio, grigio, rosso.

Ma, soprattutto, ciò che oggi chiamiamo UFO. La documentazione raccolta da Fort sugli oggetti volanti non identificati è impressionante. Migliaia di casi, registrati dalle più autorevoli pubblicazioni di ogni parte del mondo. Non c'è un angolo del pianeta che non vanti una qualche apparizione, con documenti ufficiali che risalgono fino al 1600.

**THAT AIRSHIP  
NOW AT CHICAGO**

City Excited by the Appearance of  
Rapidly Moving Lights  
in the Sky

**ASTRONOMERS HIGREDULOUS**

They Believe That the Lights Proceed  
from a Star in the Constel-  
lation of Orion

**IS A DIRIGIBLE BALLOON.**

So Says Secretary Max Harmor, of the  
Chicago Aeronautical As-  
sociation

(BY TELEGRAPH TO THE HERALD)  
CHICAGO, Ill., April 16, 1897.—For weeks des-  
patches have been coming in from various  
points between here and California regard-

Da una pagina del "New York Herald" - 11 aprile 1897.

statori dalla pelle azzurra, Genesistrine, che ci inviò animali e vegetali... Arriva a concludere che la Terra fosse, in chissà quale passato, una sorta di «terra di

stema conservativo umano (vero/falso, accettabile/condannabile, reale/irreale, ecc.). Vuole andare oltre.

«Ritengo che tutti i tentativi di scoprire la Verità... siano tentativi di scoprire l'Universale nel locale...».

Considera la Scienza come una congiura, come un sistema di potere che, arbitrariamente, esclude i fatti che possono disturbare l'andamento prestabilito della «conoscenza». Reclama libertà assoluta per l'osservatore e per il ricercatore. «Segnaliamo, segnaliamo, segnaliamo. Un giorno finiremo per scoprire che qualcosa ci ha fatto segno».

I primi frutti del suo lavoro sono raccolti in un'opera, edita a New York nel 1919, dal titolo «Il libro dei dannati».

Dove i «dannati» sono tutte le testimonianze che l'establishment scientifico-culturale ha «condannato»: testimonianze relegate nel silenzio o nel dimenticatoio, tacciate di inesattezze o di falsità, seppellite sotto sofismi pretestuosi se non addirittura esposte all'ironia o alla derisione.

In questo libro Fort presenta quasi con rabbia circa 25.000 esempi sconcertanti, uniti a considerazioni filosofiche e scientifiche. La sua analisi dell'insolito lo porta a considerare la nostra stessa esistenza come un qualcosa di indefinibile, qualcosa in cui nessun fenomeno ha senso di per se stesso ma soltanto in quanto parte di una «totalità» che la Scienza non riesce a tradurre.

## IL PIU' GRANDE MISTERO...

oblio. J. Hawkes invece cita l'iscrizione posta sulla base della statua di un medico? (presumibilmente del Medio Regno), ricordante che questi fu preposto a «... ristabilire l'istituto della Casa della Vita per la medicina» e che la provvide «... di tutto ciò che può servire all'arte, e di tutti gli strumenti necessari per lo scrivere»: la Hawkes<sup>9</sup> arricchia inoltre la C. V. di una scuola, di un dipartimento per organizzare le celebrazioni, uno per curare il calendario ed un altro per comporre le iscrizioni pubbliche, il che è probabile, ma non provabile.

L'ultimo documento infine, distaccandosi da tutti gli altri, è una estesa descrizione della Casa della Vita di Abido; P. Derchain, che cita questo papiro<sup>9</sup>, non si preoccupa di riferirne l'eventuale o la possibile datazione (Medio Regno?) lasciando a stento capire che l'originale è il geroglifico. La C. V. descritta non è altro che un quadrato di terra cinto da mura

Al contatto con questo campo ancora insondato e, ufficialmente, quasi insondabile, la fantasia e l'impeto destabilizzatore di Fort si scatenano. Egli è affascinato dagli innumerevoli richiami ad altri mondi su cui la cultura dominante tace o svicola: afferma nel «Libro dei dannati» che dai suoi dati sente salire «un vero clamore di silenzio» e riporta una serie inquietante di macchine volanti, creature alate, luci misteriose, sostanze sconosciute, resti di esseri e di oggetti mai visti.

Per non parlare degli alfabeti non terrestri, delle impronte indecifrabili, delle inspiegabili tecnologie di popoli ufficialmente primitivi o quasi. Ad un uomo del suo tempo, seppure acuto e disincantato, mancavano moltissimi elementi per discriminare in questa marea di «insolito».

Le esperienze e le conferme scientifico-tecniche che oggi abbiamo a disposizione erano, nei primi anni del 1900, utopia, se non fantasia.

Non sorprende che Fort abbia formulato teorie, per l'appunto, fantasiose. Egli ipotizza il «Mare dei Super Sargassi», una sorta di oceano cosmico dove transiterebbero viaggiatori spaziali di ogni tipo, abbandonando relitti e rifiuti successivamente attratti dall'atmosfera terrestre. Immagina e battezza pianeti/madre da cui, nell'antichità più remota, fu portata la vita sulla Terra: Monstrator, da cui vennero i giganti, Elvera, il pianeta degli esseri minuscoli, Azuria, da cui partirono i conqui-

nessuno» per il possesso della quale si scoprirono ignote potenze cosmiche: l'esito di questo, ipotizza Fort, è che la Terra sia oggi come subordinata alle direttive di un mondo superiore che, tramite suoi «emissari» viventi tra di noi, ci guida verso una misteriosa funzione.

Queste conclusioni, sfrondate dei lati bizzarri e delle tentazioni fantafumettistiche alla Flash Gordon o Guerre Stellari, contengono comunque un nucleo autenticamente rivoluzionario.

«Il pensiero profondo del nostro maestro Fort è l'unità che è sotto tutte le cose e sotto tutti i fenomeni» scrivono Louis Pauwels e Jacques Bergier in «IL mattino dei maghi». E Fort stesso: «Io vi manderò a cadere contro le porte che aprono su altro».

In definitiva l'opera fortiana è una pulce nell'orecchio del Sistema: apostolo dell'antidogma e antesignano della fantasaggistica, Fort lascia una grossa testimonianza su due punti che non cesseranno mai di farci riflettere. Primo: altri mondi comunicano con la Terra. Secondo: per comprendere il significato di ciò, occorre accedere ad un piano diverso di conoscenza, superando gli schemi mentali cui siamo abituati.

Squadrinelle, mostriciattoli e pagliacci (così Fort definisce affettuosamente i suoi resoconti nel «Libro dei dannati») forse «un giorno saranno degli angeli aggraziati».

## PRIMA PARTE



fornite di porte, privo di tetto e con al centro una tenda celante una mummia di argilla e sabbia avvolta in una pelle d'ariete: Osiride. Gli angoli est, nord, ovest e sud rappresentano rispettivamente gli déi Iside, Thoth, Neftis e Horus, mentre ovviamente la terra è Geb ed il cielo è Nut.

Nel papiro non si parla né di libri né di magia, ma solo di una semplicissima — ancorché estremamente complessa — struttura simbolica.

Abbiamo dunque due tipi della Casa della Vita: a) un centro di iniziazione speculativa, di elevati studi sapienziali e di raccolta dei testi sacri e segreti; b) un edificio simbolico d'ordine teologico ed iniziatico; ma questo non vuol dire che vi fossero due strutture differenti con lo stesso nome, in due diverse città, perché il documento 5) ci mostra che anche la C. V. di Abido aveva i suoi scribi ed i suoi testi segreti e misteriosi. Quindi? A nostro avviso la Casa della Vita vera e propria era un edificio simbolico iniziatico, come descritto nel testo 8), che però si

trovava sia ad Abido che a Sais<sup>10</sup>: ma attorno a questo «primitivo» recinto si erano pure aggiunte sale e stanze tutt'intorno per contenere i testi occulti delle conoscenze egiziane e le strutture iniziatico-sacerdotali per la conservazione e la trasmissione delle antiche tradizioni.

Questo complesso era dunque il più grande segreto dell'Egitto, in quanto conteneva i codici di tutti i segreti su cui studiarono figure poi deificate per la loro sapienza quali Imhotep e Amenophis; ed è rimasto il segreto meglio custodito, perché a tutt'oggi non si hanno ancora adeguate risposte agli interrogativi che provengono da questa remota parte dell'antichità. Auspichiamo quindi che l'egittologia rivaluti la questione nei termini che merita, e non si limiti più a posizioni rozze e sbrigative.

Gli edifici esterni potevano effettivamente dare l'impressione di una scuola o di una casa di scribi, ma certo essi oltre ad ospitare Adepti e Iniziandi ed i testi ri-

tenuti più segreti, dovevano soprattutto nascondere nell'interno il Centro Sapienziale vero e proprio; perché «la Casa della Vita deve essere molto nascosta, misteriosa ed invisibile. Solo il disco solare penetra nel suo mistero...».

Note al testo: 1) *Die Religion der Aegypter*, Berlin/Leipzig 1934. 2) Questa e le altre date secondo la cronologia attuale, ferma restando la sua estrema discutibilità. 3) Secondo la compilazione dello Sethe, *Die altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte*, Leipzig 1908-22. 4) *Testi religiosi egizi*, Torino 1970. 5) Per la curiosa storia di questo documento si veda *Shan*, II.3-1984. 6) Op. cit. 7) *The First Great Civilizations*, London 1973, p. 346. 8) Op. cit. p. 347. 9) *La religion égyptienne*, in *Histoire des Religions* a cura di H.C. Puech, Paris 1970. 10) Si ricordi che lo sdoppiamento delle istituzioni era in Egitto un fatto frequente, in quanto il paese si considerava Alto e Basso, in senso indipendente sia storico che politico.

# "CIELO E TERRA", ROMA,

Nº 77, NOV-DEC 1976

1.896-97

dalla Terra e da Venere intorno al Sole. Da Venere giunsero gli esploratori cosmici che introdussero quel calendario per loro assolutamente naturale. Kasansev assicura con alcuni scienziati che altre figure della Porta del Sole rappresentano scafandri spaziali e motori di missili completamente simili a quelli ionici solari attualmente allo studio negli Stati Uniti.

Una iscrizione in un edificio di IDFU, scoperta recentemente, dice che questo edificio è di origine soprannaturale. Il progetto fu opera del defunto Inhotep il quale era sacerdote, mago, architetto e filosofo. Egli costruì la piramide di Sakkara per il suo re che si chiamava Soter. L'edificio di 60 metri di altezza fu costruito con una grande maestria che non può essere uguagliata.  
(dalla rivista "Contacto Sideral" n.1 - settembre ottobre 1975 - Cali - Colombia).

## ONDATA DI DISCHI VOLANTI NEL 1897 IN AMERICA

Tutte le informazioni sono state assunte da giornali e libri pubblicati in quell'epoca che ignoravano la terminologia moderna come: U.F.O., O.V.N.I., umanoidi, ecc.

Stralciamo alcuni casi interessanti tutti riferiti all'aprile del 1897:

12 aprile - Nilwood (Illinois). Atterrò un oggetto sconosciuto a forma di sigaro provvisto di una cupola superiore, che si sollevò maestosamente.

12 aprile - Green Ridgen (Illinois)

Alcuni minatori videro atterrare un oggetto sconosciuto e un sorvegliante della miniera vide uscire un uomo per riparare il macchinario dell'apparecchio che era lungo come una nave e portava due cupole.

14 aprile - Cleveland (Ohio)

Un corpo con parvenza di bastimento, di circa 13 metri, che portava anche una cupola, fu visto da alcuni testimoni.

15 aprile - Linn-Grove (Iowa)

Un grande oggetto volante fu visto atterrare. Nell'avvicinarsi il testimone, l'apparecchio distese le sue quattro ali gigantesche e si alzò in direzione N. Furono osservati due piloti con capelli lunghi e un aspetto strano.

15 aprile - Springfield (Illinois)

Due operai videro uno strano oggetto posato a terra e parlarono con i membri dell'equipaggio composto da due uomini e una donna i quali dissero loro che avevano impiegato 30 minuti da Quincy a Spring e che stavano eseguendo riparazioni all'impianto elettrico.

15 aprile - Perry Spring (Missouri)

Viaggiatori di un treno ammirarono un oggetto che volava basso e lo seguirono per 15 minuti. Aveva luci rosse e bianche e poi, sebbene il treno viaggiasse a 64 Km/h, lo sorpassò e scomparve rapidamente.

15 aprile - Benston (Texas). Fu osservato un oggetto a forma di sigaro messicano, notevolmente largo al centro, con grandi ali come una grande farfalla, brillantemente illuminato, a 100 Km/h circa.

Giorni prima, nella notte del 9 aprile, migliaia di spettatori videro sopra Chicago, all'altezza di un miglio, due oggetti a forma di sigaro che volarono poi sopra altre quattro località.

19 aprile - Sistersville (West Virginia) - fu avvistato un oggetto volante con luci rosse e verdi. Un oggetto simile, o lo stesso, fu visto sopra Japs Center, nel Kansas, a circa 1280 chilometri di distanza.

19 aprile - stessa località - Fu vista una "enorme casa conica" di 55 metri di lunghezza circa, con luci risplendenti rosse, bianche e verdi, munita anche di grandi alette laterali.

22 aprile - Rockland (Texas). Fu avvistato un apparecchio volante "allungato, con protuberanze", provvisto di luci. L'apparecchio atterrò e quando si avvicinò il testimone, questi vide un uomo con intenzioni pacifiche il quale chiese, per riparare l'apparecchio, "semplici articoli da chincaglieria". Quando gli furono consegnati pagò con un biglietto di dieci dollari e poi volò con una "velocità da proiettile di fucile" e scomparve.

(ABC, edizione di Siviglia, 28 febbraio 1975 - estratto del servizio di Tomas De Martin Barbadillo - ritaglio stampa trasmessoci dal ricercatore spagnolo Ignacio Darnaude di Siviglia).

#### OGGETTO GRANDE QUANTO LA LUNA NASCOSE IL SOLE DURANTE LA CROCEFISSIONE DI GESU'

Durante la crocifissione di Gesù accadde il seguente fenomeno, tratto dal Vangelo secondo Tommaso. Secondo la nostra interpretazione si trattò di un gigantesco oggetto luminoso che occultò

il Sole per qualche tempo e poi si allontanò: 7

"Noi vedemmo questo strano fenomeno: la luna occultò il Sole senza che il tempo della loro congiunzione fosse venuto; poi dall'ora nona fino a sera, questa stessa luna si collocò meravigliosamente in opposizione con il Sole. Noi vedemmo, inoltre, la luna cominciare l'occultazione del Sole, poi ritornare sui suoi passi in modo che l'occultazione e il ritorno della luce non si produssero dallo stesso lato ma alle due opposte estremità del disco lunare. Tali sono le meraviglie che si produssero in questa circostanza e che solo il Cristo è capace di produrre". (Lettera VII del pseudo Denys l'Aeropagita, fine del V secolo in "L'évangéle selon Thomas di Jean Dorese - Librairie Plon 8 rue Garancière Paris 6°).

#### PRODIGIOSO MUTAMENTO ASTRONOMICICO NEL PERIODO DELLA CROCEFISSIONE DI GESU', SECONDO PLINIO

Sembra che verso l'epoca della morte di Cristo abbia avuto luogo un prodigio del quale gli astronomi non hanno trovato prove, ma che può essere suscettibile di sconvolgere certi calcoli della vecchia astrologia. Plinio il Vecchio (Storia Naturale - XXXVI paragrafo 15), riguardando all'obelisco eretto da Augusto al Campo di Marte e la cui ombra terminale cadeva su contrassegni di bronzo accuratamente piantati nel suolo per segnare le ore in funzione di tutti i momenti dell'anno, scrisse:

"Da circa 30 anni (dettaglio che situa il fenomeno prima dell'anno 39 al più tardi) le osservazioni hanno cessato di essere esatte sia che il Sole

1

AN OCTOPUS IN THE HAND-

(is worth any number of them in the Smithsonian)

INFO JOURNAL, N<sup>o</sup> 8, WINTER-SPRING 1972

In November of 1896, at St. Augustine Beach, Florida, a huge lump of organic matter washed ashore.

The first scientific observer on the scene was Dr. DeWitt Webb, a local physician and President of the St. Augustine Scientific Society. Dr. Webb examined the remains and pronounced them to be that of an octopus.

Measurements of the carcass gave these figures: size of the body as 18 to 22 feet long and 6 to 7 feet wide; estimated original weight of the head and body as at least four to five tons; the arms an estimated 75 to 100 feet long and 18 inches in diameter at the base. (The vagueness of the measurements arose due to the facts that the carcass was originally partially buried in the sand of the beach, and that it is somewhat difficult to measure an octopus under any circumstances -- and if you can't understand that, just try it some time.)

The case was brought to the attention of Prof. A. E. Verrill of Yale, at that time one of the world's leading authorities on cephalopods (or, to be pedantic, teuthologist -- another cute trick: try asking your friends what an expert on cephalopods is called.)

Verrill, having received descriptions and tissue samples from Webb, concurred in the identification of the creature as an octopus. A new biological species was created: Octopus giganteus Verrill.

This was in the early part of 1897. Verrill wrote his judgement for The New York Herald, The American Naturalist, and The American Journal of Science. He was an authority on the giant squid -- he had been the man who made the kraken scientifically respectable (after so many of them had washed up in Newfoundland waters in the 1870s that they could no longer be explained away) -- and he gave his considered opinion that the Florida monster was indeed a cephalopod: not a giant squid, but an incredibly large octopus.

But we all know that there ain't no such animal.

And so it was that a voice spake unto Verrill: "thou shalt have thy giant squid, but thou shalt not have thy giant octopus."

Verrill, harkening unto this voice, recanted.

In The New York Herald, The American Journal of Science, and Science, Verrill now declared that he had been mistaken and that the Florida carcass was actually that of some not-readily identifiable portion of a whale.

"But I am unable to refer this immense, closed, pouch-like mass to any part of any known whale, or, in fact, to any other animal..."

Tissue specimens from the carcass revealed "very little oil" -- a most atypical circumstance to be expected in any kind of cetacean remains.

It must be interjected at this point that we have not done any research on this case ourselves, but that all our information comes from "An Octopus Trilogy", by F.G. Wood and Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., Natural History Magazine, March, 1971. We wrote Dr. Wood and obtained a print of the photograph appearing on our cover. (We assume that this was taken on Dec. 7, 1896 and that the gentleman in the picture is Dr. Webb. The photo is credited to the American Museum of Natural History.)

To continue: Verrill at first agrees with Webb, who was apparently the only knowledgeable person ever to inspect the carcass, then he decides to disagree with Webb, and moreover to become inconsistent with himself. At first Verrill examines the tissue specimens and finds them un-cetacean in nature. Then he looks at them again and "rejects them as having come from a cephalopod." Perfect logic: since the carcass must be that of a whale, or some part of same, the samples that are clearly from a cephalopod must not be from the same carcass.

F. A. Lucas, then Curator of Comparative Anatomy of the National Museum, was less circumspect than Verrill, and less scientific: "The substance looks like blubber, and smells like blubber and it is blubber, nothing more or less."

Whether or not he had a nose for blubber, Dr. Lucas certainly had a nose for knowing when to say the safe thing. That, after all, is the whole point of being a Curator.

Webb describes the integument (covering) of the creature as muscular. Verrill says that it "shows a lack of muscular tissue." Webb describes the carcass as "simply a great bag." Verrill calls it a "great bag-shaped mass."

#### Agreement and Disagreement.

But we somehow find ourselves assuming that Verrill should be able to tell the difference between the tissue of a whale and that of a cephalopod. At least as well as anybody could -- he is an expert, remember?

What accounts for the change of opinion? An Associated Press release dated April 10, 1971, reports Dr. Gennaro as saying, "We could find no scientific evidence that accounted for his switch. Presumably he was under a lot of pressure from the scientific community because of the controversy it caused."

It seems to us that we've heard that remark before.

The last official document in Round One of the Great Octopus Battle is a letter to W.H.Dall, Curator of Mollusks at the National Museum, from his superior, Prof. F.W.True (marvelous name!). It begins, "I am sorry to say that the secretary does not see his way clear to have the cuttlefish examined..."

#### Cuttlefish.

The cuttlefish is a cephalopod, no species known to exceed five feet in length, neither a squid nor an octopus. If there were a better way of signifying a complete lack of conception as to what problem was involved, or of showing a greater lack of interest, we might have expected a reference to "the whale blubber"...

Sufficient unto the day is the disinterest thereof.

In 1962, Dr. Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., was allowed to take a sample from the specimen material of Octopus giganteus Verrill in the Smithsonian. Photomicrographs revealed the tissue to be that of an octopus.

Afterwards the remaining material in the Smithsonian's jar was lost.

So now the giant octopus is respectable. Even if the Smithsonian did lose what was left of the 1896 specimen. ... We're prepared to admit for once, perhaps, that the Smithsonian can sometimes lose something not as the result of being too organized (organization equals incompetence), but simply out of a normal and routine incompetence.

The Natural History article ends with a section on tales of sightings of giant octopi by Bahamian fishermen. (Octopi have a fascinating colloquial name in those waters: scuttles.) This brought to mind a couple of curious items relating to cephalopoid creatures, mythical or otherwise, from the Pacific -- where the previously officially-largest octopus lives.

Jorge Luis Borges, in his The Book of Imaginary Beings, describes under "The Fauna of Chile" the hide.

"The Hide is an octopus that lives in the sea and has the dimensions and appearance of a cowhide stretched out flat. Its edges are furnished with numberless eyes, and, in that part which seems to be its head, it has four more eyes of a larger size. Whenever persons or animals enter the water, the Hide rises to the surface and engulfs them with an irresistible force, devouring them in a matter of moments."

Borges' source for this was the Myths and Superstitions of Julio Vicuña Cifuentes.

We know of one alleged modern report of a hide-like organism from the Pacific. In Eric Frank Russell's Great World Mysteries he cites an account by an Australian diver in the South Pacific:

"All the way down I was followed by a fifteen foot shark which circled around full of curiosity but made no attempt to attack. I kept wondering how far down he would go. He was still hanging around some thirty feet from me, and about twenty feet higher, when I reached a ledge below which was a great, black chasm of enormous depth.

"It being dangerous to venture further, I stood looking into the chasm while the shark waited for my next move. Suddenly the water became distinctly colder. While the temperature continued to drop with surprising rapidity, I saw a black mass rising from the darkness of the chasm. It floated upwards very slowly. As at last light reached it I could see that it was of dull brown colour and tremendous size, a flat, ragged-edged thing about one acre in extent. It pulsed sluggishly and I knew that it was alive despite its lack of visible limbs or eyes.

"Still pulsating, this frightful vision floated past my level, by which time the coldness had become most intense. The shark now hung completely motionless, paralysed either by cold or fear. While I watched fascinated, the enormous brown thing reached the shark, contacted him with its upper surface. The shark gave a convulsive shiver and was drawn unresisting into the substance of the monster.

"I stood perfectly still, not daring to move, while the brown thing sank back into the chasm as slowly as it had emerged. Darkness swallowed it and the water started to regain some warmth. God knows what this thing was, but I had no doubt that it had been born of the primeval slime countless fathoms below."

The date was 1953, but unfortunately the INFO copy of the Russell book is a paperback with the original reference editorially chopped out. So the locale of the report isn't known to us.

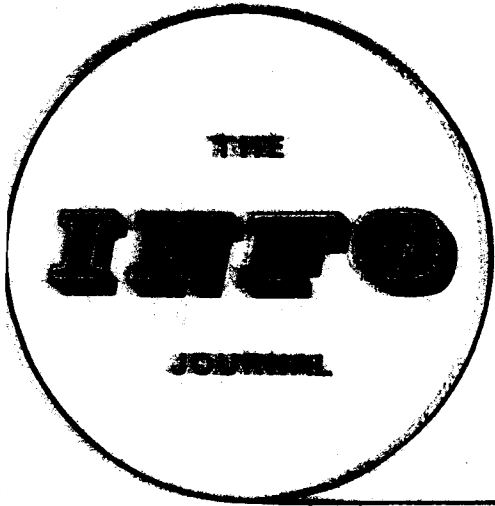
The hide sounds rather like an enormous version of the umbrella-like octopi of great depths. Perhaps it isn't altogether imaginary?



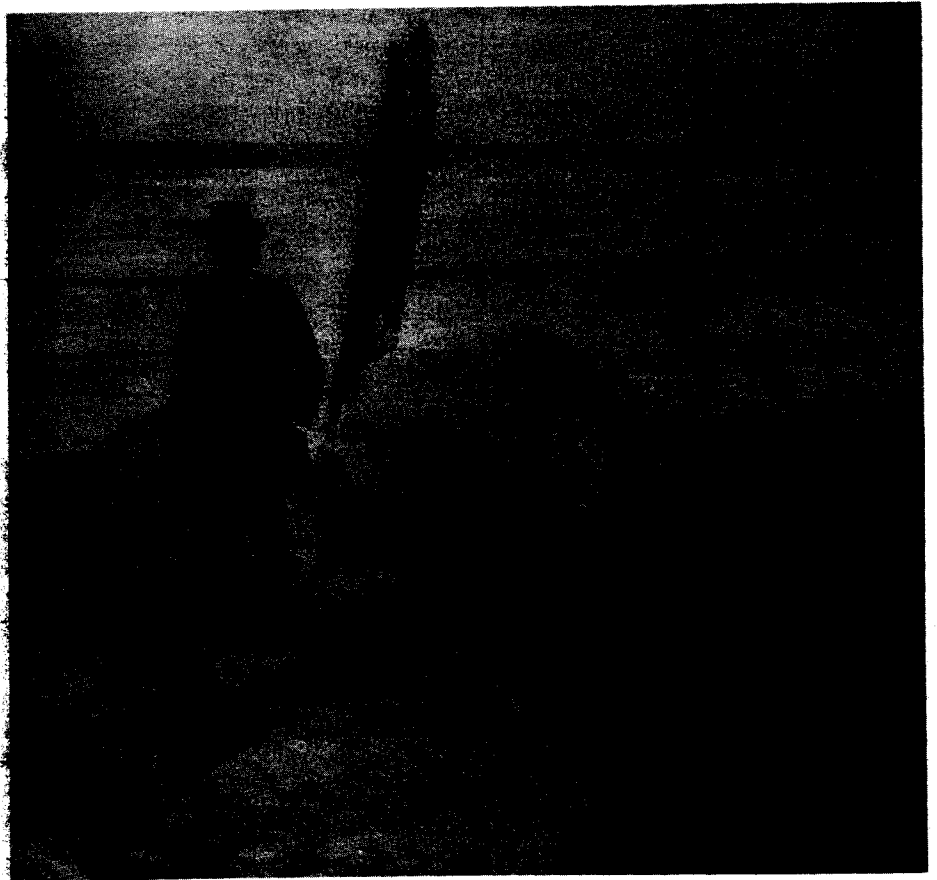
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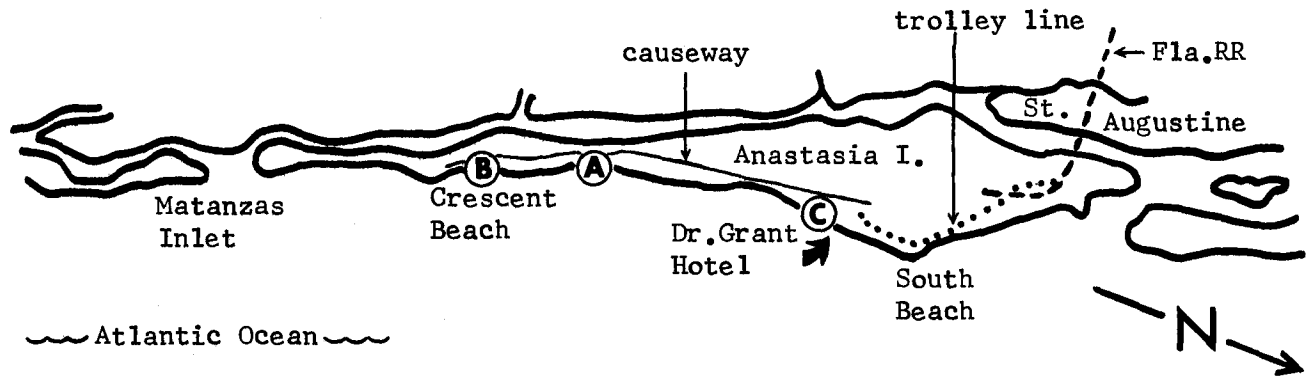


Giant Octopus — Florida, 1896

# Monster on the Florida Beach

Part I by Gary S. Mangiacopra

INFO JOURNAL, No 17, MAY 1976



- A = Original position of octopus, Dec. 1896.  
B = New position, Jan. to Mar. 1897.  
C = Final position, Mar. 1897.

Map prepared by the author based on one drawn for the St. Augustine Historical Society in 1916, and showing the various locations of Octopus giganteus from December 1896 to March 1897.

The lead article of the INFO Journal #8, dealt with the discovery of a beached sea monster that upon examination in 1896, and later examination in 1963 of the preserved tissue samples was identified as a gigantic octopus of 100 feet in length. (1)

The following account is a personal investigation and reexamination of the facts and a vindication of this discovery, which is still considered by science as a joke.

## THE STORY

The discoverers of the giant resident of the seas were two young bicyclists, Herbert Coles and Dunham Coretter of St. Augustine, Florida, who were cycling along Anastasia Beach towards Matanzas Inlet (see map) on the evening of November 30, 1896. Their trip ended abruptly when they came upon the remains of an immense carcass that was deeply embedded in the sands. (2)

News of the two boys' discovery would have been quickly consigned to the obscurity of brief newspaper mentions if not for the intervention of a local and remarkable citizen, Dr. DeWitt Webb. By profession a medical doctor, by avocation a local historian and amateur naturalist,

Dr. Webb would become the leading figure in this controversy, as he solely undertook the responsibility of collecting and recording the facts. (3)

Due to the distance and the lateness of the day it was not until the next evening, December first, that Doctor Webb along with several others was able to examine the beached carcass. Due to the isolation of the beach at that time of year, the carcass was probably beached for several days before its discovery and its weight of five tons had caused it to sink into the sand to a considerable depth. The dimensions of the visible portion measured 23 feet in length, 4 feet high, and 18 feet across the widest part of the back. It was much mutilated at one end and in an advanced state of decomposition. The hide was of a light pink color, nearly white, with a silvery appearance. But the most startling fact, Webb concluded, was that the remains were not those of a supposed beached whale, but of a monstrous octopus! (4)

Cloudy weather and rain prevented Webb from reexamining the octopus until Dec. fifth, but during the days of waiting he had the foresight to realize the importance and uniqueness of this chance dis-

covery.

Revisiting the site with two amateur photographers two days later, photographs were taken showing different views of the octopus as originally found. Drawings later published show a pear-shaped body with the largest section near the broadly rounded posterior end and flatter toward the smaller mutilated end. The head is almost unrecognizable due to mutilation and decay, but the most important feature visible in the foreground is what looks like the remains of the stumps of five arms.

Several days after the photograph session, a Mr. Wilson claimed to have dug around the carcass and found the fragments of the arms, stating, "one arm was lying west of the body, 23 feet long; one stump of arm, west of body, about 4 feet; three arms lying south of body and from appearance attached to same, longest one measured over 32 feet, the other arms were 3 to 5 feet shorter." (5)

Shortly after Mr. Wilson's excavation a severe storm had washed the carcass out to sea, to be cast ashore again two miles farther south. When later reexamined the reported arms were missing, probably the result of wave action on the carcass. Doubt as to the verification of the reported arms would later cast suspicion

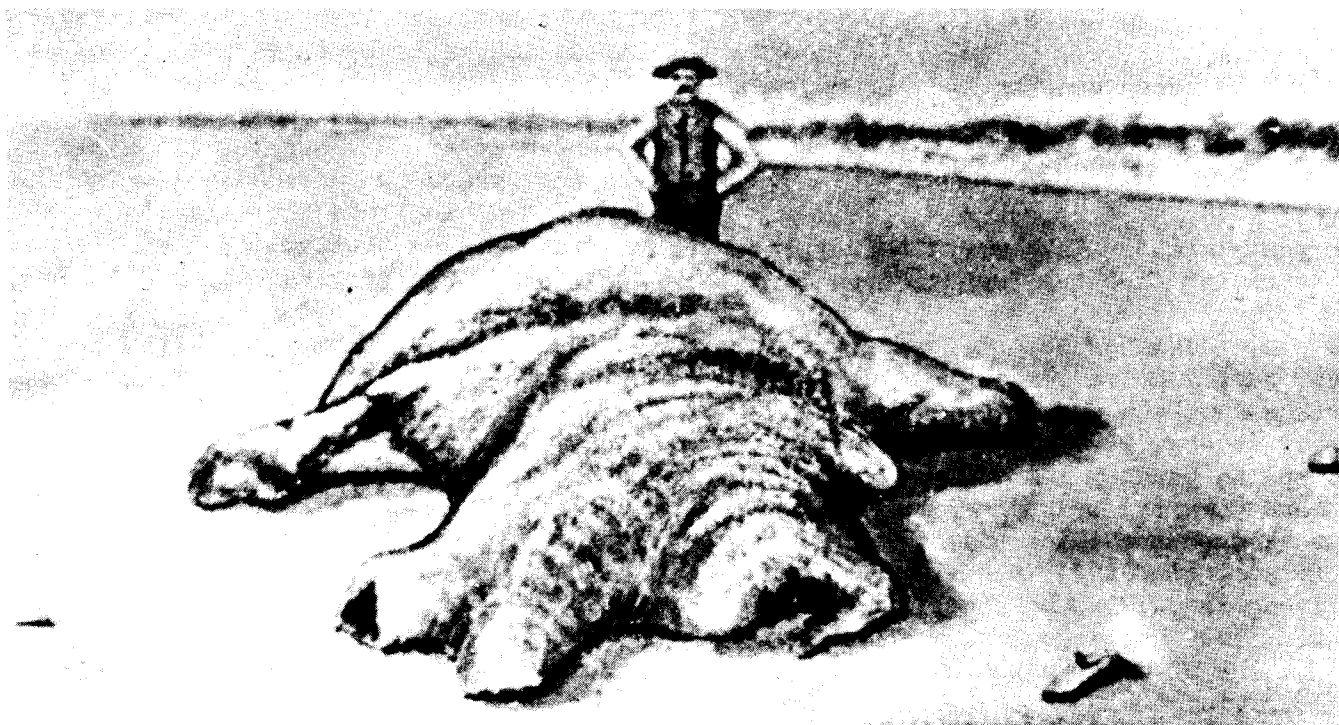
upon other data obtained by Webb.

Webb began a series of letters in hopes that others more qualified would personally examine the octopus. A letter dated Dec. 8, telling of the discovery of the body, passed through several hands until it was acquired by A. E. Verrill, Professor of Zoology at Yale University, best known for his work on the legendary sea monsters now recognized as the giant squids.

Verrill published a brief notice in the American Journal of Science for Jan. 1897 of this discovery. Based upon the dimensions given in the letter, he concluded that it indicated a giant squid, rather than an octopus, but a squid larger than the specimens he had studied in the 1870's. (6)

Verrill's position was that there had never been a scientific examination of an octopus of the dimensions of the giant squids (60 feet in length). Though he did not consider the possibility that there could always be a first time, Verrill quickly reversed his opinion after receiving additional information and photographs from Webb. (7)

Verrill's first article in his revised opinion was as a Sunday supplement for the New York Herald of Jan. third. Recounting the facts of this monster



The carcass, end view, drawn by A. Hyatt Verrill, from a photograph taken Dec. 7, 1896. From the American Naturalist, April 1897.

and based on the information of a reported fragment of arm 36 feet long by 10 in. at its broken extremity, the length of the arms would have been from 75-100 feet by 18 inches at the base, reaching an area 200 feet in diameter. (8)

He formally presented this new species of giant cephalopod in the following Feb. issue of the Am. Journal of Science, with additional information and based especially on photos sent by Webb, showing an eight-armed cephalopod, probably a true octopus of enormous size.

Officially the new species was named Octopus giganteus Verrill, though there was criticism at his failure to name the species in honor of Dr. Webb, since he was the person who identified and recorded the facts at considerable time and expense to himself.

Concluding that this was the first giant octopod described from an actual specimen, Verrill at a later date would question the correctness of the information he obtained, for he had based his published statements entirely on the facts gathered during the early part of December.

Due to the distance and stormy weather, Dr. Webb was unable to revisit the octopus until the second week in January. During this interval the monster was washed from the place originally found, and when located, had suffered further mutilation, especially the loss of the alleged fragments of arms.

Though in correspondence with Prof. Verrill about his new findings, Webb wrote a series of seven known letters to W. H. Dall, Curator of Mollusks at the National Museum at Washington, D.C.

In early January Webb wrote of his efforts at trying (and failing) to turn the monster over. No less than a dozen men with strong tackle could not turn it over and only partly raised it. Photographs were taken and Webb was trying to raise the money to draw it out of the pit it was in and up the bank by means of horses and tackle and then try to spread the hood out and cut through the thick hide that measured in some places  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick.

Writing Jan. 17, Webb records, "Yesterday I took four horses, six men, 3 sets tackle, a lot of heavy planking, and a rigger to superintend the work and succeeded in rolling the Invertebrate out of the pit and placing it about 40 feet higher upon the beach where it now rests on the flooring of heavy plank...on being straightened

out to measure 21 feet instead of 18...A good part of the mantle or head remains attached near to the more slender part of the body...The body was then opened for the entire length of 21 feet...The slender part of the body was entirely empty of internal organs. And the organs of the remainder were not large and did not look as if the animal had been so long dead...The muscular coat which seems to be all there is of the invertebrate is from two and three to six inches in thickness. The fibers of the external coat are longitudinal and the inner transverse...no caudal fin or any appearance if there had been any...no beak or head or eyes remaining...no pen to be found nor any evidence of any bony structure whatever."

This lack of a pen (cartilage material that is shaped like a quill pen), found in all the squids, gave support that it was probably not a squid, and the lack of bony structure would eliminate its having been some mammal, such as a whale, added support to the octopus identification.

Webb continues, "It is still in a comparatively good state of preservation and so would it not be a good thing for yourself or Prof. Verrill of Yale or both of you to come down and examine it for yourself and so determine its exact place better than I can...."

"If you think of coming at all you ought to come at once. I have written a similar letter to Prof. Verrill. You see I have said invertebrate rather than a squid because that is entirely safe."

But neither Dall nor Verrill would take the advice to personally examine the octopus. Perhaps due to Verrill's busy schedule and the possibility that Yale could not afford to send him to Florida at that time, he remained at home.

The same reasons may have prevented Dall, for a letter to him from Y.A. True reads, "I am sorry to say that the secretary does not see his way clear to have the cuttlefish examined at the cost of the Institution and the Museum can scarcely afford the expense at this time.

"Could not measurements etc., be made by Dr. Webb and some specimens saved?"

A brief letter of the 18th from Webb adds, "...I think I made one mistake in my description. The external muscular layer is circular and the internal longitudinal."

But Webb's revision to his description of the musculature is not character-

istic of either the whale or the octopus.

A brief article in the local St. Augustine newspaper based on information supplied by Webb contains the only printed reference that Dall acknowledged with Verrill that the remains were those of an invertebrate animal, the largest one ever recorded. (10)

Three weeks passed before Webb wrote on February fifth, "I made another excursion to the invertebrate and brought away specimens for you and for Prof. Verrill... Although strange as it may seem to you I could have packed them in salt and sent them to you at once although the creature had been lying on the shore for more than two months. And I think that both yourself and Prof. Verrill while not doubting my measurements have thought my account of the thickness of the muscular, or rather tendonous husk pretty large so I am glad to send you the specimens and express them in salt in a day or two... My time has been so limited when I have gone down that I have been unable to make a satisfactory examination of the viscera...."

On February 10th: "...I will ship the specimens to you tomorrow... I expect to have the creature moved up in a day or two when it can be put in better shape for examination. Prof. Verrill had decided to call it the *Octopus Giganteus*.

"I wrote to Prof. True to the expense of formalin in quantity as there will have to be a good deal used in the attempts to have the creature preserved. It will be worth while to make a good deal of effort if it is the 'only one.'"

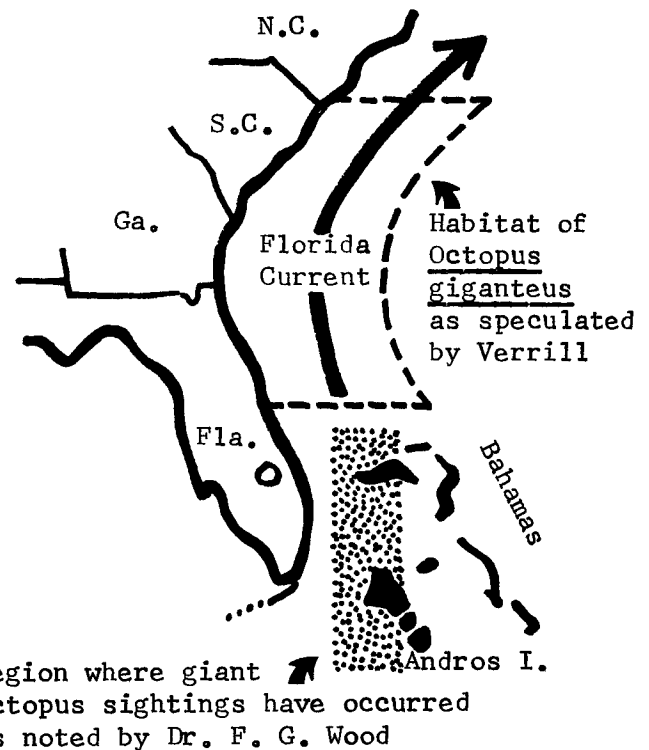
February 12th: "The box with the specimens from the '*Octopus Giganteus*' was shipped this afternoon by Express to Mr. True who as the Curator in charge was I thought the proper person to send it to..."

This letter marks the beginning of the controversy as to the correct identification of the animal's carcass.

While the specimens were in transit, Verrill published a second Sunday supplement for the Herald of February 14th and speculated on the size, habitat, and population density of these creatures. (11)

He estimated the live weight at 18-20 tons, with arms in length of more than 100 feet with hundreds of suckers; eyes a foot in diameter, and 10 gallons of ink in its ink bag.

Speculating that there must be thousands of others of equal size, their habitat would be the broad plateau that ex-



Region where giant octopus sightings have occurred as noted by Dr. F. G. Wood

tends out to sea 200 miles off South Carolina, Georgia, and north Florida, where in depths of 200 fathoms they would crawl on the bottom. (see map)

This region was the feeding ground of the sperm whale and the octopus was probably killed and partly eaten, with the remnants washed ashore in a storm.

On this same date, the New Haven, Conn., Evening Register published "Octopus for Yale." This would add something to the controversy at a later date, for it was written by Prof. Verrill's son, A. Hyatt Verrill, praising his father for his work on proving the Viking legends of the Kraken, giant squids, and saying that not until this present winter had anything approached the Kraken in size. (12)

Preservatives were forwarded to Dr. Webb to save as much as possible of the carcass, as portions of the body were awaited in New Haven.

On February 23 the specimens arrived at Yale.

On February 23 Verrill wrote the first two letters of retraction, subsequently published in Science, March 5th, and the Herald of the 7th, stating that he had just received some large masses of exterior integument, elastic, very tough and hard to cut, composed mainly of tough cords and fibers of white elastic connective tissue, much interlaced and bound together with irregular cavities and canals in some pieces. Little oil was present, though

whale blubber contains significant amounts of oil, even when beached for long periods of time. He concluded that these structures resembled those of blubber of some whales and that the creature could not have been an octopus but was a vertebrate animal! (13, 14)

But Verrill was unable to refer this bag-like form to any part of any known whale or any other organism that was large enough to have such a massive covering, and was puzzled as to how it could have been attached to any whale. His supposition originally that it was the body of an octopus was based entirely upon its general form and appearance as shown by photographs and on the reports of alleged stumps of arms.

(to be continued in next issue)

\* \* \*

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# the CABRERA ROCKS

by Ryan Drum

Some of us do not accept in any way the Bering Strait land bridge means of people coming to the Americas. Cold sober investigators are working slowly but surely to reveal carefully excavated and dated finds and sites presenting wild and exciting evidences for the long inhabitation of the Americas by people. In many ways the most extravagant claims and data are those presented by Dr. Javier Cabrera, an MD specializing in circulatory ailments, who lives and digs in Ica, Peru. Cabrera is a hyperkinetic, chain-smoking, dashing man in his early fifties; overtly brilliant, he has amazing ideas about cancer, genetics, religion, nutrition, and mortality. He is a much respected surgeon and physician in Ica (by the assertion of patients and associates), and the picture of fitness: in essence a delightful and convincing human who, unlike so many pushy inventive folks, is neither fat nor misshapen nor ugly or otherwise messed up so that he uses his scholarship act as compensation for personal inadequacy. We first learned of Cabrera from Maria Reiche (Mystery in the Desert - an amazing tri-lingual account of the Nazca Lines) who suggested that no greater marvel occurred in Peru. The "marvel" consisted of petroglyphs with strange scenes. When we got to Ica we asked for Dr. Cabrera; most knew him and his rocks, and told us that we "could judge for ourselves." We made an appointment one day for 1 p.m. and kept it as did Cabrera. As soon as he learned that I was a biologist and well-educated, his enthusiasm knew no bounds. We asked to see the petroglyph and he went into a sort of histrionic trance during which he mentioned that we were going to see the impossible, that we should be careful to whom we revealed the things, and that unregistered artifacts were liable to government seizure and he feared for his collection of rocks.

# News From Another World: The Nebraska UFO-Cryptozoology Conference

reported by Michael D. Swords

November 11, 12, 13 of 1983: Ray Boeche, Nebraska State Director for the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), engineered one of the finest Fortean conventions in recent years. Big Guns, J. Allen Hynek (Center for UFO Studies), Walter Andrus (MUFON), and Roy Mackal (International Society for Cryptozoology), headed a sparkling cast of experts who kept the audience and the press crackling with interest. ABC television featured the activities nationwide.

The mysteries of living dinosaurs, out-of-place animals, lake monsters, spontaneous human combustion, UFO abductions, crashed saucers, and cattle mutilations paraded before the conferees in an inspired format: four speakers per day, scheduled half-hour question and discussion sessions behind each talk, and one and a half-hour discussion sessions for all speakers at the end of the day. The interchange was dynamic and intimate. Everyone shared in the exchange. Even the experts learned some things. Thank you, Ray, for an extremely good show.

And, now to business...

**Part One: Cryptozoology and Combustion, a Cabinet of Curiosities.**

For this reporter, the presentation of Dr. Mackal (University of Chicago) was the outstanding example of solidity and excitement of the three days. Extant Dinosaurs! This dream of *SITU* founder Ivan Sanderson may be about to materialize. As *Pursuit* readers realize, there have been stories and folklore from central Africa for many years, alluding to the big beasts "head-like-serpent, body-like-elephant, tail-like-crocodile" that inhabit the great untracked swamps of the Congo and Rhodesian areas. Dr. Mackal and explorer-friends James Powell and Richard Greenwall have twice ventured into extremely difficult terrain in the Eastern Congo. To the west of the great Ubangi River lie regions nearly untouched. Here remain tropical swamps, similar to the domains of the Cretaceous dinosaurs. As the world entered the modern (Cenozoic) age, these regions may have remained stable, stable enough to allow a species of nature's most startling creations to survive. The names in the great quest are properly exotic: the village Impfondo, the river Likuoala, the village Epena, the river Bai, further and further removed from biology labs in Chicago and the support systems of civilization. What did they find?

Many biological samples were taken, including the tough Molombo fruit which is the alleged primary food source of the animals. Witnesses were quizzed by the animal flash-card method, with internal checks of cards of animals known *not* to be in the region included. Saurians were identified as the nearest to "mokele mbembe" by the natives. Lake Telle was said to be a recent haunt. Breaks or possible trackways in the bush were investigated. What were the preliminary conclusions?

1. stories describing the animals got vaguer going both North and South along the Likuoala; leading them to believe they were "in the vicinity."
2. witnesses passed the flash-card test with consistency; they didn't identify "ringer" cards like bears, they *did* recognize something like suariano.
3. descriptions of the animals as herbivores are not only consistent palaeontologically, but would seem unlikely for a

mere folkloric fantasy relating to religion (such creatures usually are *directly* involved with humans in some more sinister way).

4. a "trackway" seemed consistent with a large animal with a massive tail, but which also stood several feet high. Neither elephants nor crocodiles seemed to have all the necessary tools.
5. the Molombo fruit, analyzed in the States, had the nutritional value of a low-fibre content pear, rather low in protein content but judged "marginal" for an adult ruminant. Maybe the animals have another food source to supplement their diet in protein.
6. After Mackal's expeditions left the Congo, local explorer-scientists penetrated to Lake Telle and photographed the animals; these films are being processed in Paris. The cryptozoologists of the world anxiously await, and Dr. Mackal is poised to return.

As related side-issues to the great Saurian-hunt, the good doctor revealed that the notorious *That's Incredible* film of mokele mbembe by Kevin Duffy was a hoax of the crudest sort. Local villagers in Impfondo carved the head and the son of the local dentist-missionary strapped it on for the swimming scene. That, indeed, is incredible. Another claimant, the Regusters expedition, penetrated to Lake Telle and may have observed the animals. Unfortunately, the films were lost or incorrectly produced. Some taped materials survived and will be reported upon soon in the *Journal of Cryptozoology*.

Dr. Mackal also reported on Loch Ness and the northern "lake monsters." His studies show correlations between sightings and salmon influx from the sea. He feels that ocean-going animals, primitive whales or Zeuglodonts, follow the salmon run into the cold lakes and are then occasionally seen. Some individuals may remain behind if the lake is rich enough in fish, and be witnessed elsewhere in the year.

Another mystery involved *Octopus Giganteus Verrill*, the monster of the St. Augustine, Florida beach of 1896. Photos still exist as does *tissue* from the beast held in the Smithsonian Institution. Examination of the tissue shows the same alternating bands of connective tissue and protein-collagen characteristic of smaller well-known octopi, and the amino acid content of the species is comparable only to the smaller octopi, (*not*, for instance, to whale, dolphin, or squid). Photo analysis of the stumps of the octopus' arms indicate tentacles which would have stretched to great length, giving the creature a 150' spread tip-to-tip. So where is this denizen from Jules Verne today? The folklore tradition would indicate south of Andros Island in the Bahamas. Jacques Cousteau, where are you?

Two quick South American possibilities: 1) sightings of "Loy's Ape," the "impossible" large primate of northern South America, were confirmed by Danny Liska of Bogota, Colombia in the discussion period; also 2) Dr. Mackal mentioned another "hot" dinosaur possibility on the Bolivian-Brazil border. Pack your bags and go South!

Next up on the Fortean part of the program was the youthful but veteran cryptozoologist writer, Loren Coleman. Loren decided to try out some experimental ideas on the audience: at-



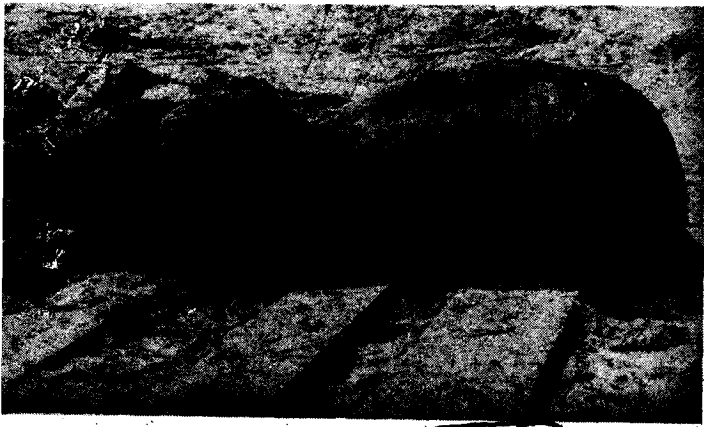


Photo of "sea monster" taken in January 1897 on beach near St. Augustine, Fla., shows creature's massive muscles.

## *Octopus Giganteus Verrill*

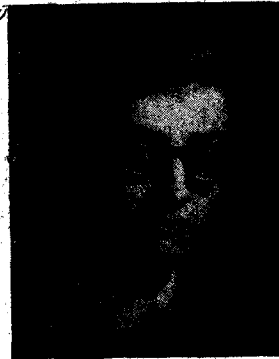
# GIANT OCTOPUS or WHALE?

By Gary Mangiacopra  
Reprinted by permission from OF SEA AND SHORE

For half a century marine biologists have dismissed Verrill's "giant octopus" as remains of a whale—but modern research indicates he may have been right.

**R**EPORTED REMAINS of "sea monsters" found washed ashore on beaches usually turn out to be mutilated carcasses of sharks, whales, oarfish or other known denizens of the deep. But occasionally an unknown animal—one whose existence is not even suspected—is discovered by chance in this way. Such a chance discovery, made in 1896, still is the subject of controversy in marine zoology.

The story began unexpectedly on the evening of November 30,



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

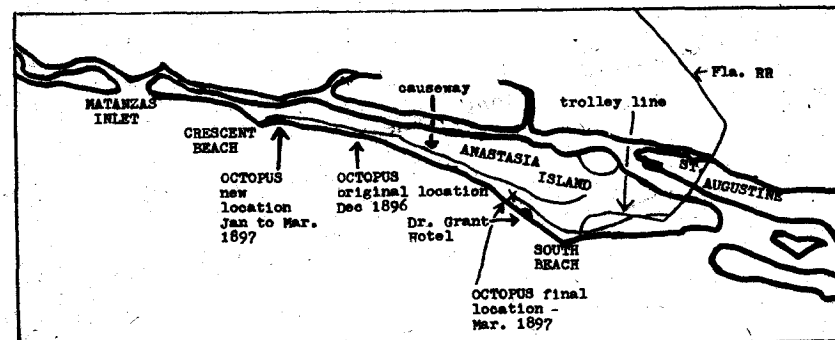
GARY S. MANGIACOPRA was born in Bridgeport, Conn., in December 1950. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in biology from the University of New Haven in June 1975.

He decided to use Verrill's giant octopus as the topic for his thesis in the spring of 1972. He reasoned that since Professor Verrill was associated with Yale University, only a few miles from his own school, he could easily acquire the original references in a few months; the few months expanded to nearly three years!

He presented his findings on the giant octopus at the International Fortean Organization's 1975 Fortfest.

1896, when two young bicyclists, Herbert Coles and Dunham Cor-etter, pedaled along Anastasia Beach near St. Augustine, Fla. Their planned trip to Matanzas Inlet at the far south end of the beach ended abruptly when they came upon the remains of an immense carcass embedded in the sand.

The two boys immediately notified Dr. DeWitt Webb, St. Augustine's leading naturalist. A medical doctor by profession, Dr. Webb's interests in both local history and natural history had led him to found the St. Augustine Historical Society and Institute of Science, which he served as president for 34 years. During



Author's map shows the St. Augustine, Fla., beach area where the giant octopus was found in December 1896 and its later locations after storms moved it.

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Drawing published in "The American Naturalist" in April 1897 was based on the only photograph that clearly indicates stumps of five arms in the foreground.

those years he devoted considerable effort and money to maintaining and expanding the society.

So the next evening, December 1, Dr. Webb along with several others examined the beached "whale." Their first examination revealed that due to the isolation of the beach during the winter months the carcass probably had lain there several days before its discovery. They estimated its weight at five tons as it had sunk into the sand to a considerable depth. The carcass was much mutilated at one end and in an advanced state of decomposition. That portion visible above the sand measured 23 feet long, four feet high and 18 feet across the widest part of the "back." The outer surface of the

hide was light pink, nearly white, and had a silvery appearance. Dr. Webb's startling conclusion was that the remains were not of a beached whale as originally supposed but of a monstrous octopus!

Rain prevented Dr. Webb from examining the carcass again until the fifth of December and during this wait he must have realized the importance and uniqueness of the chance discovery and the need for accurate records. On December 7, 1896, Dr. Webb revisited the site with two amateur photographers, Edgar Van Horn and Ernest Howatt, who took several different shots of the octopus where it lay embedded in the sand. Unfortunately these photographs now are missing but two drawings based

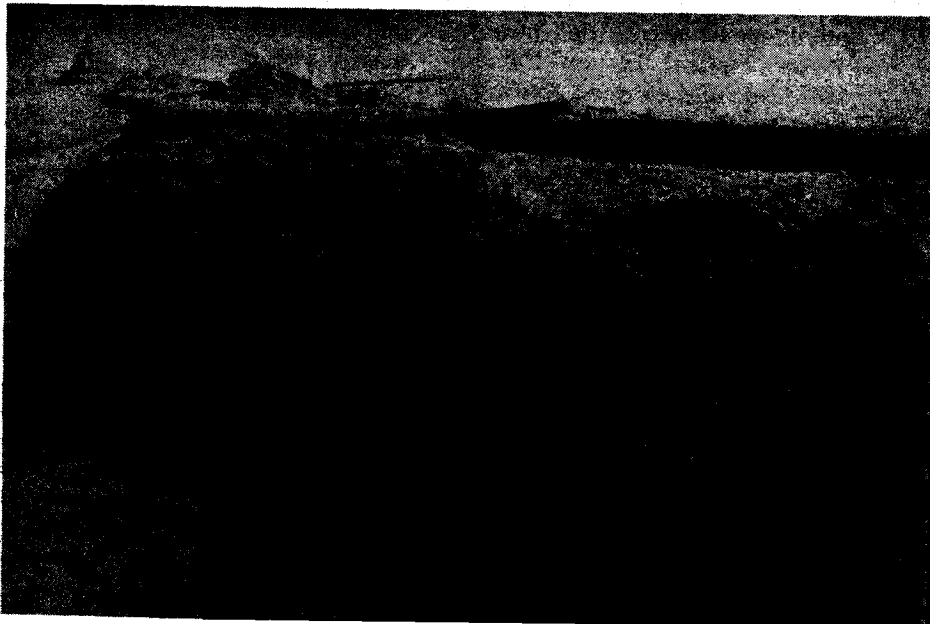
on them appeared in *The American Naturalist* in April 1897.

The more important drawing shows a pear-shaped body with the largest section near the broadly rounded posterior end. Due to mutilation and decay the head is almost unrecognizable but in the foreground appear what look like the stumps of five arms. The figure in the background, probably Dr. Webb, gives us some indication of the size of the carcass. The second drawing shows a side view with the thicker posterior end gradually tapering to the stumps of the arms, two of which are discernible.

Several days after these photographs were taken a Mr. Wilson claimed he excavated in the sand and found the fragments of the arms. He wrote Dr. Webb, "One arm was lying west of the body, 23 feet long; one stump of arm, west of body, about four feet; three arms lying south of body . . . longest one measured over 32 feet, the other arms were three to five feet shorter."

Soon after Mr. Wilson's examination a severe storm washed the carcass out to sea and cast it ashore again two miles farther south near Crescent Beach. The reported arms now were missing and, of course, this cast doubt on

When this January 1897 photograph was taken, the monster's carcass already had suffered extensive mutilation from storms and was in an advanced state of decay.



ished speculation on the size, habitat and population density of these sea creatures. Verrill estimated that "the living weight of the creature was about 18 to 20 tons. When living it must have had eight enormous arms, each 100 feet or more in length, each as thick as the mast of a large vessel and armed with hundreds of saucer-shaped suckers, the largest of which could have been at least a foot in diameter.

"Its eyes would have been more than a foot in diameter. It would have carried 10 or 12 gallons of ink in the ink bag. It could swim rapidly, without doubt, but its usual habit would be to crawl slowly over the bottom in deep water in search of prey.

"We must reflect that wherever this creature had its home there must be hundreds or thousands of its kind, probably of equal size, otherwise its race could not be kept up. Its habitat is probably the broad plateau that extends out to sea about 200 miles off the coast of South Carolina, Georgia and North Florida, on which the water increases very gradually down to 200 fathoms."

\* \* \*

ON FEBRUARY 23, 1897, the specimens forwarded by Dr. Webb reached Yale University. That same day Verrill wrote two

letters in which he retracted his earlier identification. He states that he had received "some large masses of exterior integument preserved in formalin, in size from three to 10 inches thick, elastic, very tough and hard to cut, composed mainly of tough cords and fibers of white elastic connective tissue that were much interlaced and bound together with irregular cavities and canals in some places." Verrill concluded that the samples resembled the blubber of some cetaceans and that the creature could not have been an octopus but must have been a vertebrate animal!

The specimens sent to Smithsonian's National Museum were examined by Prof. Frederic Augustus Lucas who wrote in *Science Magazine*, "Professor Verrill would be justified in making a much more emphatic statement that the structure of the masses of integument from the 'Florida monster' resembles blubber and the creature was probably related to the whales. The substance looks like blubber and smells like blubber and it is blubber, nothing more nor less. There would seem to be no better reason for supposing that it was in the form of a 'baglike structure' than for supposing that stumps of arms were present." Professor Verrill had difficulty

Dr. Webb's original description.

Dr. Webb wrote a series of letters to various scientists telling of his discovery. One of these was forwarded to Prof. Addison Emery Verrill of Yale University, New Haven, Conn. A systematic zoologist, Dr. Verrill was the author of over 350 scientific articles and had described more than a thousand new species. Of his numerous accomplishments in zoology he is best known for his research on cephalopods, the mollusc group to which the squids and octopuses belong. In the 1870's he had proven the legendary sea monster, the Kraken, was in fact the giant squid.

Professor Verrill consequently was much interested in the discovery of a huge octopus and published a brief report, based on information contained in Dr. Webb's letter, in the January 1897 issue of *American Journal of Science*. He tentatively concluded that the carcass must be a giant squid as no known octopus reached such gigantic size. But Verrill quickly reversed himself when Dr. Webb sent further details and photographs of the animal.

In the Sunday supplement for the *New York Herald* for January 3, 1897, Verrill published the first description of the unknown creature and called it a gigantic octopus. By comparing its pro-

portions with smaller species, he estimated the arms must have reached 75 to 100 feet. The creature's 200-foot diameter would exceed the size of the largest known giant squids. He repeated this description in the February issue of *American Journal of Science* and formally named the beast *Octopus giganteus*.

During the second week of January 1897 Dr. Webb relocated the carcass in the new location to which the storm had moved it. With the aid of "four horses, six men, three sets of tackle, a lot of heavy planking and a rigger," he succeeded in freeing the monster from the sand and placing it on planks about 40 feet higher up on the beach. This permitted more careful examination and measurement of the specimen and a new set of photographs. He tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Professor Verrill and Prof. William Healey Dall, Smithsonian's curator of molluscs, to come and study the creature where it lay. On the fifth of February Dr. Webb wrote that he visited the monster to collect samples of the flesh to send to Dall and Verrill for study.

While the specimens were in transit, Verrill published another article in the Sunday supplement of the *Herald*. It was a popular account based on Webb's letters and contains Verrill's only pub-

relating the large mass of tissue to any recognizable part of a whale. His best guess was that "it came from the head of a creature like a sperm whale in structure. . . ." But Verrill's son A. Hyatt Verrill mentioned the creature in his 1916 book, *The Ocean and Its Mysteries*, and stated that no scientist could guess as to what animal it came from. Since young Verrill was well-acquainted with his father's articles on the monster and his father was still living, we can suspect that Professor Verrill still was unsure about the creature's identification despite his earlier conclusion that it was a whale.

Except for Hyatt Verrill's mention of the creature in 1916, the only attention it received in the half century following its discovery was given it by the late Charles Fort, who included the find in his list of sea monsters in his 1931 volume, *Lo!* Not until 1957 was any further serious research done. In that year Dr. Forrest G. Wood, Jr., Curator of the Research Laboratories of Florida's Marineland, came upon a yellowed clipping while researching octopus behavior. His interest was aroused and Dr. Wood began to investigate the reported find. Unfortunately, no records report the disposition of the creature after Dr. Webb suc-

ceeded in dragging it up from the beach. The specimens sent to Yale have disappeared. When Peabody Museum's original building was torn down in 1911 the specimens housed there were widely scattered until the new museum was completed in 1926. Presumably the monster specimens were lost during this period.

In 1962 Dr. Wood discovered that the other two specimens of preserved tissue still existed at the Smithsonian Institution. The following year he persuaded a colleague, Dr. Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., to cut away and examine a small piece of the preserved tissue for identification. Dr. Gennaro prepared microscope slides of the monster flesh and also slides from octopus, squid and whale. Using polarized light and comparing the connective tissue patterns Dr. Gennaro concluded the Florida creature slide resembled the octopus slide, had no similarities to the connective tissue of the squid and absolutely no structure pattern in common with any mammal including whales. His verdict was that the tissue had come from an octopus!

Unfortunately, shortly after Dr. Gennaro's examination the container holding the original specimens of tissue was misplaced during a move at Smith-

onian and suffered a fate identical to that of the Yale specimens which had been lost some 10 years before. Because an article concerning the giant octopus written by Dr. Wood and Dr. Gennaro and published in *Natural History* in 1971 was met with scorn and derision, Dr. Gennaro later analyzed the last remaining fragment of tissue he had saved for further chemical examination. He concluded "the chemical constituents of the monster's collagen were of the type found in the octopus and that none of this type of tissue exists in the squid at all."

\* \* \*

NOW, MORE THAN half a century after the unidentified carcass was found on the Florida beach, what do we know about giant octopuses? That one existed in 1896 and that its size, based on its mutilated remains, indicated an overall length of 100 feet is all we know. Anything more is speculation.

In the *Natural History* account Dr. Wood cites reports which suggest that such octo-

puses may have been sighted in 600-foot-deep waters off of Andros and Grand Bahama Islands in the Bahamas. If we assume the creatures are restricted to the Bahamas, then the Florida current that flows from the tip of Florida to Cape Hatteras, N.C., might have carried the carcass that washed ashore at St. Augustine in 1896. Or Professor Verrill may have been correct when he speculated that the creatures live off the southern coast of North America.

We are left with this question: Why haven't there been more reported sightings of these animals? Of course, if we do not recognize the possible existence of such an animal, then when they are sighted they may be mistakenly identified as known animals in the reports.

And yet 80 years have passed since the only representative of its kind was found and examined. Perhaps the words Dr. Webb wrote to Professor Dall were prophetic, "It will be worthwhile to make a good deal of effort if it is the 'only one.'"

#### THE COOKS' TOURS

ARRIVING for duty with the Fifth Organizational Maintenance Squadron, Minot Air Force Base, N. Dak., Master Sgt. Kenneth Cook discovered he was replacing another master sergeant named Kenneth Cook. Both men are married to women whose first names are Jo Ann. Each couple has four children, a girl and three boys, and two of the boys in each family are named Kenneth and Michael.

— Clarence E. Drumheller.

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#### THE MONSTER FRONT

IT BOGGLES the mind to consider the many kinds of monsters one reads about in the papers—giant eels and other sea creatures, abominable snowmen, the Loch Ness monster and unknown animals from bottomless pits. For this issue we have a full house.

Perhaps the most exciting, because it's the best documented, is the account of a giant octopus 200 feet in diameter—about two-thirds the length of a football field. The Associated Press dredged up the report and although it is 75 years old it's a doozy.

The story begins in 1896 when a giant sea animal washed up on the beach at St. Augustine, Fla. On hand to examine it was A. E. Verrill, a Yale professor and marine life expert, who identified it as an octopus and named it *Octopus giganteus* Verrill. Later on

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Verrill changed his opinion and said it probably was part of a whale, although the flesh "contained very little oil."

However, two marine biologists now have concluded that Verrill probably changed his mind under the pressure of ridicule by the scientific community and the controversy that resulted. They have good reason to believe the gigantic creature was indeed an octopus — even though the largest known giant cephalopod is only about 60 feet long.

For one thing, measurements of the 12,000-pound carcass found at St. Augustine indicate arms 70 to 100 feet in length and 18 inches thick at the base. Very few whales have such arms.

For another thing, a pretty substantial chunk of the creature was preserved in formaldehyde at the Smithsonian Institution. Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr., associate professor of biology at New York University, and Dr. F. G. Wood, senior scientist and consultant at the Naval Undersea Research and Development Laboratory, studied this chunk and collaborated on an article published in the March 1971 issue of *Natural History*.

Among the evidence they reported, as a result of Gennaro's study of the Smithsonian preserved tissue, is (1) the tissues were "with certainty" not those



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## IS THERE A BRITISH MONSTER OCTOPUS?

by

Ulrich Magin

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At the end of the 19th century, science accepted the existence of the giant squid, but rejected that of the giant octopus. The big octopus of the Northwest American Pacific coast is still the only scientifically recognized species of that kind. The "octopus giganteus" of the Bahamas and Bermudas is still much doubted, despite good and recent evidence (1). In an earlier article I investigated the chance that big unknown octopi also live in the Mediterranean (2), a suggestion that has been verified by the find of a monstrous dead octopus near Sapri in Italy (3).

In this paper I will examine the evidence for a monster octopus in the British Isles.

We should note first that the biggest accepted octopus found in British waters was a "specimen with a radial spread of just over 6 feet and weighing 7 pounds" that was "spear-gunned by a member of the Brighton Swimming Club near the Palace Pier, Brighton, Sussex in September 1960, but spans up to 8 feet and a weight of 10 pounds have been claimed for other individuals." (4)

Bearing this in mind, let us now look at claims or sightings of such animals of bigger or monstrous proportions.

A Scottish newspaper, the Inverness Courier, reports the most northern story of that kind: "Skye Policeman's 'Capture' - Struggle with Giant Octopus at Broadford - Constable Ian Morrison, of the Inverness Constabulary, who killed an octopus on the shore at Broadford, Skye, on Saturday, believes that the beast might be a giant squid. Its identity should be soon established, however, as it is to be examined by experts of the Scottish Marine Biological Station and the Royal Scottish Museum. The creature measured 4 feet across the body, with eyes 4 inches in diameter, and it had eight tentacles each 6 feet in length.

"Constable Morrison had a narrow escape when he went to examine the object he saw lying half in the water. A tentacle shot out from the seaweed and gripped him by the left ankle. Fortunately, the Constable was wearing Wellington boots, and was able to withdraw his leg from the boot. He got clear, and later dispatched the huge brute by throwing stones at it, and belabouring it with a five-foot piece of wood.

"Marine experts are very interested in the Constable's 'capture.' Dr. A. C. Stephen, of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, said that it was most unusual to find an octopus of such a size nearer Britain than Madeira" (5).

This story would be a good beginning for the article, but alas! the brute was simply a big squid. Dr. Stephens later identified it as a Stenoteuthis caroli, a big squid that has been stranded upon British shores more than once (6).

But we do not know what the monster "Kraken" was that was observed at Rothesay on the Isle of Bute in 1775 (7). The description of the animal is far too short, and it could have been a giant squid, a whale, an optical illusion or a vegetable mat -- as in that time "Kraken" simply meant "a monster as big as an island."

The last Scottish case involves a mysterious rotten carcass with very big eyes that was cast ashore at the Mull of Kintyre, near the Isle of Bute, in 1944 (8). The description sounds a bit like the 1896 St. Augustine monster, identified now by many as a giant octopus. It sounds even more like any of the 'globsters' found on beaches all over the world, which have proved mainly to be decomposed basking sharks or whales; and so an identification of the creature as a basking shark is very likely.

Moving south to Cornwall, we find that fishermen there know the giant octopus well: "The belief in a huge octopus-like creature still lingers in the

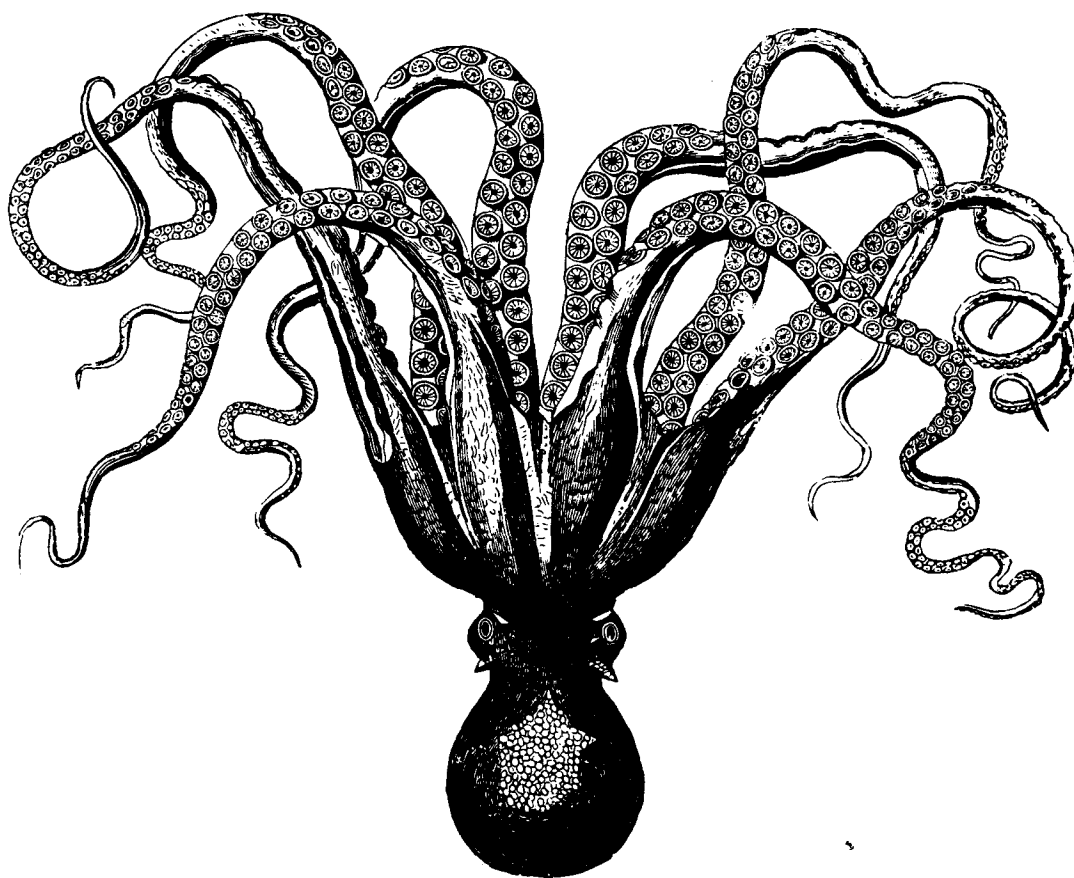
district around Godrevy and Portreath on the North Coast. Here the sea bed shelves steeply and the old sailors explained the sudden depth as the monster's lair" (9).

There is in fact one occurrence which could show that these fishermen's superstitions are based on fact: the French magazine Yachting Gazette wrote on December 16, 1899, that a Mr. Fison was attacked in 1897 by several monstrous octupi near Sedmouth, Cornwall. Fison escaped, but about a dozen other people fell victim to the beast (10).

An interesting story, but, as the French cryptozoologist Michel Raynal discovered, not based on truth, but upon an 1897 short story by H. G. Wells called "The Sea Raiders." In this novel, as in many others, Wells sells fiction as fact. He mentions not only Fison's octopus attack, but the stranding of a giant octopus near Land's End in 1896 (11). Obviously, the French editor did not recognize the fiction as such, or he consciously sold his readers a hoax.

The last Cornish report is about a "tentacled seamonster," published in the Falmouth Packet in 1977: "A new menace threatens the local coastline, a 20 foot long monster with Fongs that entangle boats and bathers." The paper then explains that this monster is an aggressive form of Japanese seaweed that threatens the local flora (12). Our last chance to find a real British monster octopus is the Channel Islands (British territory, although geographically they belong to France).

Victor Hugo's novel Toilers of the Sea describes the fight between a local and an awesome octopus that takes place in a grotto. This fight has become the stereotype for many other less ingenious adventure stories in books about diving and cheap horror novels (13). Hugo, however, claimed that his description of the monster was based on fact and not purely imagined. He knew a shrimp fisherman from Brecq-Hou, on Sark, who had been attacked and was drowned by a giant octopus some years before 1866 (13).



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## Debunking the Debunkers

# of the Giant Octopus

In a 1994 paper for *Fortean Studies*,<sup>1</sup> I told the story of the huge mass of organic tissue found on the Florida coast in 1896 and thought to be the remains of a gigantic species of octopus, named *Octopus giganteus* by Professor Addison Emery Verrill in 1897. My colleague and friend Gary Mangiacopra and I are also in the process of publishing a detailed account of the same affair in a four-part article for *Of Sea and Shore*.<sup>2</sup> Our conclusion, based on an in-depth analysis of the huge mass of documents, articles, photographs, and modern analyses then available, was that the "Florida monster" was indeed the remains of a gigantic octopus, possibly belonging to the cirrate sub-order of the octopods.

In the past few months, however, several articles have tried to debunk this "sea monster." Although they were published in scientific journals, they are full of inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and mistakes, not surprisingly from authors with preconceived ideas, if not overt hostility, against cryptozoology.

The first of these "scientific" articles,<sup>3</sup> on the history of the discovery of the giant squids (*Architeuthis*), appeared in the *Archives of Natural History* in January 1995. The author, Australian biologist W. R. A. Muntz, also mentions the case of *Octopus giganteus*, about which he writes:

"A statement by a Mr. Wilson, one of the first people to see the carcass, says that the arms were *not attached to the body* [my emphasis] but were found some distance away. On microscopical observation, Verrill found that the integuments sent to him were blubber, and concluded that the carcass most probably came from a sperm whale. The detached arms could plausibly be those of a squid, eaten by the whale, which spilled out of the whale's body

when this broke up on the beach."

Apart from the fact that Verrill only made a visual—not "microscopical"—observation (as far as we know from his articles), it requires a lot of cheek to assert that the arms were not attached to the body, in order to prove that they came from a giant squid vomited by the sperm whale. Because Mr. Wilson never said such a thing! He wrote in his report:

"One arm was lying west of body, 23 feet long; one stump of arm, west of body, about 4 feet; three arms lying south of body and from appearances attached to same (although I did not dig quite to the body, as it laid down in the sand, and I was very tired), longest one measured over 32 feet; the other arms were 3 to 5 feet shorter."<sup>4</sup>

If there is still any doubt that these arms were attached to the body, it will suffice to read Verrill again:

"Dr. Webb writes that a few days after the photographs were taken (Dec. 7th), excavations were made in the sand and the stump of an arm was found, still attached, 36 feet long and 10 inches in diameter where it was broken off distally."<sup>5</sup>

And what about those photographs, which Muntz certainly did not study, which show that the arms and the body belong to one and the same animal?

Muntz's attack against the giant octopus was generally ignored, but the controversy recently resurfaced, as new tests on the remaining samples of the "Florida monster" and the "Bermuda blob" (a similar looking mass found on the Bermuda coast in 1988) purportedly showed that they have nothing to do with a giant octopus. This new chapter of the saga was published in the *Biological Bulletin* of April 1995,<sup>6</sup> and comments on the results appeared in various scientific magazines, such as *New Scientist*

Michel Raynal

**This unpublished photo (opposite), found in the files of the Smithsonian Institution, shows the huge carcass that washed ashore on Anastasia Island, near St. Augustine, Florida, in 1896.**

and *Science*<sup>7</sup>—a favor not given to the previous works by Wood and Gennaro (1971),<sup>8</sup> Mackal (1986),<sup>9</sup> Mangiacopra (1976),<sup>10</sup> and myself (with Dethier, 1991).<sup>11</sup> In the *Biological Bulletin* article, Sydney K. Pierce, Timothy K. Mangel, and Eugenie Clark, of the University of Maryland at College Park, and Gerald N. Smith, of the Faculty of Medicine at Indianapolis, begin with methodological criticism of Gennaro's and Mackal's works (my own contribution on iron and copper measurements is ruled out in one word as "inconclusive," without any other trial). They remark that Gennaro did not give references for the samples of the "contemporary octopus and squid" he used for his histological tests. But it should be remembered that the results were published in *Natural History*, a popular magazine where this kind of detail is never given. On the other hand, there is much to criticize about the methodology of the paper in *Biological Bulletin*, despite its "serious" appearance.

1. Pierce, *et al.*, speak of the "complete lack of suitable test of taxonomic relationships in Mackal's data," a statement that could itself be challenged (Mackal analyzed samples from an octopus, a giant squid, and various cetaceans). But Pierce and company have chosen the most unlikely candidates for their samples:

- A rather obscure abyssal octopus (*Bathypolypus arcticus*), the biology and physiology of which is certainly poorly known. If comparisons are to be made, they should be with the largest known species of octopus (*O. vulgaris* and *O. dofleini* for instance), and with the cirrate octopods such as *Cirrotheuthis*, *Grimptoteuthis*, *Cirrothauma*, etc., as only these groups of octopods have been proposed to account for the Florida monster as a giant octopus.

- The humpback whale (*Megaptera novae-angliae*). Comparisons should have been made with the sperm whale (*Physeter catodon*), as suggested by A. E. Verrill's conclusion that the Florida monster came from the spermaceti tank of this toothed cetacean. By the way, the scientific name of the humpback whale is *Megaptera novae-angliae* ("the one from New England with large flippers," from Latin *nova-anglia*, genitive *novae-angliae*), and not "novaeangelae," as it is printed twice in their article.

- The completely irrelevant rat tail tendon collagen!

2. Nothing is said about the range of the different concentrations of amino acids, banding pattern of the collagen fibers, and so on. Pierce and fellows claim that the results are significant for a warm-blooded vertebrate, but we have to accept this as if they were Bible verses.

3. Strangely enough, for such an important controversy, they did not make a "blind test." Mackal and myself, with regard to methodology, worked on anonymous samples (1M, 2M, etc.), the identification of which was

given after the results were obtained.

Let us see now what Pierce and colleagues did.

First of all, they present electron microscopy photographs. They show that the samples of the Florida monster are mostly collagen fibers arranged in layers that are perpendicular to each other, a structure found also in the blubber of the humpback whale. On the other hand, the mantle of *Bathypolypus arcticus* is mainly composed of muscle, with only a small amount of collagen. Also, the banding periodicity of the collagen fibers was 54.3 nm (nanometers: 1 nm = 10<sup>-9</sup> meter) in the Florida monster, and 54.6 nm in the whale sample, compared to 46.6 nm in *Bathypolypus arcticus*.

These observations seem to be definitive, but as Mackal emphasized in his 1986 article, a huge octopus should possess a huge mass of collagen, for biomechanical reasons.<sup>12</sup> The low amount of collagen in a small octopus such as the one curiously chosen by the four authors is thus not at all surprising, and the enormous amount of collagen in the Florida monster should not be considered as evidence for it not being an octopus: quite the contrary!

As we have no data on the range of the banding periodicity in various cephalopods and cetaceans, what is the significance of a difference of only 16%? Measuring the collagen fibers from the dorsal aorta of *Octopus dofleini* (the largest known species of octopus), Gosline and Shadwick found an axial periodicity of 600-640 Å (Angström: 1 Å = 10<sup>-10</sup> m) or 60-64 nm.<sup>13</sup> Hunt, Grant, and Liebovich even find a 680 Å periodicity in the mantle collagen of the squid *Loligo peallii*.<sup>14</sup> And what about a species (*Octopus giganteus*) of which we know nothing? Moreover, the width of the fibers may have been slightly altered after almost 100 years of storage in organic solvents.

Concerning the perpendicular pattern: rather than a genetic difference, it is probably a biomechanical necessity in order to reinforce the structure when a great quantity of collagen is present. A giant octopus should therefore be expected to have the same pattern as a large whale. It is interesting that the electron micrographs published by Gosline and Shadwick show a tendency to a much greater amount of collagen in *Octopus dofleini* than in Pierce's sample from *Bathypolypus*, as well as a tendency to a perpendicular pattern. Also significant is Pierce and fellows' comment on the presence of fat deposits in the cetacean blubber they used as a reference sample; this is quite unlike the Florida monster sample, which shows a lack of any fat tissue, in agreement with a cephalopod!

Our four biochemist musketeers then discuss an amino-acid analysis that, as they conclude, shows that the samples of the Florida monster are almost pure collagen. As a matter of fact, this "discovery" was already demonstrated and published by Mackal nine years earlier.<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the detailed results of the concentration of each amino acid, the four Dalton brothers of "scientific" debunking give great value to the imino acids (a peculiar

# Another Response to the Giant Octopus Controversy

Keith L. Partain

The largest species of octopus known to me is *Octopus dofleini*, the Pacific Ocean octopus, which can reach a length of ten feet. Octopi are characteristically benthic (bottom-dwelling) cephalopods, and a large octopus would require large subterranean caves for concealment as well as a rich fauna to sustain its bulk. In this situation, the controversy regarding *O. giganteus*, we are discussing a mollusk over an order of magnitude longer than, and probably three orders of magnitude bulkier than, *dofleini*.

It is in ignoring the fundamental ecology of such a hypothetical creature that one sees the almost invariant, narrow focus of some debunkers. There is no *a priori* reason to deny *O. giganteus* a niche in nature. Although giant octopi are generally thought to flourish only in the fecund imaginations of Victor Hugo and Jules Verne, some evidence of them has come to our attention. The 1896 *O. giganteus* remains are just such possible evidence, as well as a bone

of contention.

Or perhaps I should say "collagen

of contention," inasmuch as octopi are invertebrates, and it is collagen that Sydney K. Pierce, *et al.*, concentrate on in *Biological Bulletin*. I tend to agree with *INFO Journal* editor Michael Shoemaker (private communication, Aug. 13, 1995) that far too much emphasis was placed on collagen (connective tissue) and too little on other relevant factors. Although Pierce insisted that bacterial action removed all but collagen from the carcass, there was no reported search for any muscle proteins or enzymes. Alfred S. Romer noted in *The Vertebrate Body* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1971, p. 26) that arginine is used for phosphorus metabolism in invertebrate muscle. The question is: could any traces of arginine (or creatine, the vertebrate muscle counterpart) survive? As many observers have noted, samples were kept in different solutions and were stored (in the Florida octopus case) for many decades. Preservatives or not, some degradation of the samples is possible. To be fair, however, I agree with Shoemaker that Pierce's Table I (p. 228)—the amino acid ratios—was

the most pertinent evidence. Nevertheless, why should we assume a member of an unknown genus or species, however closely allied, should have a similar amino acid content or collagen fiber configuration? Entomology teaches one to be wary of just such generalizations!

Dismissal of Gennaro's work (due to the specious reasoning that it was too popular, lacking in rigor and methodology) and Mackal's work (no doubt due to prejudice against the journal involved, *Cryptozoology*) was clearly, as Charles Fort would put it, *exclusionistic*. Add to this the eyewitness reports of probable tentacles and viscera (augmented by suggestive photos), and I really would prefer to leave options open for *O. giganteus*, pending new data.

Keith L. Partain, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, holds a bachelor's degree in zoology and a master's degree in entomology. Two of the courses for the advanced degree dealt with general invertebrate zoology and paleontology.

group of amino acids), whereas Mackal noted that no conclusion (in any direction) could be made from the results of serine and threonine, due to the sample's long storage in formaldehyde.<sup>16</sup>

Although the collagens are not too different from species to species, there *are some* differences, mainly in the acidic acids (aspartic and glutamic acids): according to Pikkarainen and Kulonen, there is an increase from 110 per 1,000 residues in the homeothermic (hot-blooded) animals, up to 150 per 1,000 residues in invertebrate collagens.<sup>17</sup> With a concentration for aspartic plus glutamic acids of 13.1% (14.7% or 15.9%, depending on the samples, according to Mackal's measurements<sup>18</sup>), the results are more indicative of an octopus than a cetacean, whatever Pierce and colleagues claim, for the results of the other samples in Pierce, *et al.*, are: Bermuda blob 13.5%, squid 14.4%, carp 11.7%, whale 11.6%, shark 11.1%, but only 11.7% in *Bathypolypus* (which can be explained by the storage of the sample in isopropyl alcohol, a powerful organic solvent). Significantly, the highest concentrations are found in the Florida monster, the Bermuda blob, and the squid, in agreement with Pikkarainen and Kulonen scale for invertebrates!

Finally, they conclude that the collagen is skin collagen from the blubber of a cetacean. This is complete nonsense: blubber is only a layer of fat tissue (and let us remember that no fat tissue was found in the Florida monster), the shape, the thickness, the size, and the weight of which can by no means explain the Florida monster—unless one speculates that it came from a skin tumor never reported. As they also conclude that the Bermuda blob, a similar-looking mass of collagen, came from a cold-blooded vertebrate, we thus have not one, but *two* unexplained cases of anomalous, unrelated animals.

I would like to recall a significant anecdote about Pierce. In reply to my letter, he wrote:

"The photo you sent is the same that Richard Ellis published in his book.<sup>[19]</sup> In the figure caption, he says that the structure extending *to the right* [my emphasis] of the carcass appears to be a tentacle. Unfortunately for Ellis, other photos taken at the same time clearly show that the structure he refers is a wooden pole, undoubtedly part of the rigging Webb used to unearth the carcass."<sup>20</sup>

In fact, Ellis writes, "... something that appears to be an arm extending from the body of the creature *at the*



right [my emphasis].”<sup>21</sup> So, Pierce is now caught short, mistaken preposition in support. Ellis clearly writes that the body (not the arm) is on the right of the photograph!

Bernard Heuvelmans here drew attention to the fact that cryptozoology is a multidisciplinary science that uses all the available data: witnesses’ accounts, native traditions, photographs, anatomical fragments, etc.<sup>22</sup> Biological tests are of course welcome, but they only constitute additional evidence, certainly not the sole evidence, and not necessarily the best. There are definitely many reasons to think that the Florida monster was indeed a giant octopus. For instance, at least three witnesses (Dr. Grant, Mr. Wilson, and Dr. Webb) saw and described stumps of arms, which can be seen on several photographs taken in 1896-97 (some of them unknown to Verrill). Webb also noticed the presence of “organs” or “viscera” in the stranded mass (which do not exist in cetacean blubber)—this, among many other points analyzed in my articles already cited, should be taken into account.

I have, however, imagined three other tests that could give more certainty on the nature of the Florida monster, in order of increasing precision.

1. An electrophoresis of collagen, compared with known collagens. The electrophoretic mobility (speed of the protein in an electric field) will depend on the mass of the protein, hence of its zoological affinities.

2. Decoding the *sequence* of amino acids of the collagen (and not only measuring their concentrations), and comparing it with known collagens, should provide information on the substitutions in the chain of amino acids of the collagen protein.

3. An immunological test: a solution of the monster’s collagen is injected into a rabbit, which will make antibodies against it. The rabbit’s plasma is tested with known collagens through radio-immuno assay (RIA). One would expect the following result:

Vertebrates → Squids → Octopuses  
 weak reactivity    greater reactivity    high reactivity

Until these tests are made, I remain convinced that the Florida monster actually was what its scientific name of *Octopus giganteus* suggests it is, a gigantic species of octopus.

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**Another view of the Florida carcass. Author Richard Ellis interpreted the horizontal material in the center foreground as an appendage, extending from part of the body at lower right. Debunker S. K. Pierce imagined that Ellis was referring to the vertical pole with attached cables seen at upper right. Another pole appears in the upper right corner.**

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*Michel Raynal is a former physics and chemistry technician and biologist. He now works as senior manager for France Telecom.*

FATE, Nov. -85

# Cattle-Killing UFO of 1896

The object we saw that night was the most terrifying thing we'd ever seen—until the next day's sickening surprise.

By Pearl Chenoweth as told to Shannon Graham

I WILL never forget the terrifying experience my family and I had with a UFO in Missouri when I was nine years old. Our sighting took place, as I recall, in August 1896.

My parents Ezra and Serepta Vickers, my brother Ben and I lived on a farm in Howell County and had lots of cattle and horses. We worked hard and in the evening, when the chores were done and supper was over, we would sit in the yard resting and trying to pick out the different constellations like the Big and Little Dippers. It was a favorite game for Ben and me.

The night we saw the UFO, the sky was clear and a million stars were twinkling. It had been a hot, dry summer and we needed rain.

All at once we saw flashing lights. At first we thought they were a star shower. But the "stars" stayed in a circle as if they were all strung together like beads. Meteors scatter when they fall, so we soon realized we were seeing something else. The circle of lights just kept whirling and falling toward us. In my mind I can still see those bright lights.

They were brighter than any star.

As small as I was, I remember thinking there was nowhere to run or hide from this thing. What was it going to do to us? For some reason I thought it was unfriendly, that it meant only to do us harm.

I ran to my mother and clung to her skirts, crying and shaking so hard that I could barely stand. I'm sure she was as frightened as I but she tried to comfort me.

At that time I had never seen a balloon, airplanes were in the future and nothing belonged in the sky but the sun, moon and stars. We watched fascinated. We could not take our eyes off the object as it moved west right toward us, turning and falling out of the night. Just when we thought it would crash in the yard, it stopped and hovered over the barn. We could now see it was a large saucerlike shape. Its lights were blinding. The whole barn lot lit up like day.

My father grabbed up the baby who was sleeping on a pallet and we fled into the house. None of us dared voice our fear that God had returned, that this

as the end of the world. My father handed the baby to my mother and went into the kitchen to look out the window. The lights were still hovering there. We could see no sign of life, no forms moving out of the object. If there was a door, it was on the other side.

My parents gathered us children in the living room and we huddled together absolutely terrified, waiting for a knock at the door or for the door simply to burst open. My father started to pray, tears running down his cheeks as he hugged all of us. It was one of the few times I ever saw him cry.

I don't know how long we knelt there. All I know is that it seemed like hours. Except for my father's voice murmuring in prayer, there was no sound. The silence was the worst of all. We waited helplessly, not knowing what was going on outside, wondering what might happen to us at any moment.

At last my father got up the courage to go back to the kitchen and look outside. The thing had gone.

We slept very little that night. Was the saucer gone for good? Would it come back? Lying wide-awake in my bed, I could hear my parents downstairs as they talked far into the night. Every so often my father would go to the door and look out. And the horror was not over.

The next morning when Ben took his dog Cappie and went out to the pasture to bring up the milk cows, as he always did, he came running back to the house scared out of his wits.

Mother and I were getting breakfast when he appeared in the kitchen door so pale I thought he was going to faint. He kept pointing toward the barn, stammering words that made no sense.

Finally Mother got him seated in a chair and bathed his pale little face with cold water. Then he told us what he saw.

As he and Cappie neared the gate that opened into the pasture, Cappie stopped in his tracks, whining and barking. The grass was almost knee-high to the cows, so the animals were not immediately visible to a 10-year-old boy. But in a large patch of burned grass were three of our steers lying dead on the ground. Their bodies were beginning to bloat from the heat; their legs were poking out stiff as boards. Cappie snarled, showed his teeth and refused to go near them. That was when Ben ran back to the house.

Father, who had come into the kitchen while Ben was talking, ordered us to stay in the house while he went out to the pasture. When he came back he was as shocked as Ben. He told us he had examined the steers and as far as he could see there was only one thing wrong with them: they had been completely drained of blood. The only marks on them were some dried blood on their throats from two puncture holes in the jugular vein; these looked as if they had been made by a two-tined fork.

The idea that something or someone had dropped out of the sky to take the blood of animals sickened us. Had they drunk the blood, put it on their food, used it for medicine? What might have happened if they had found us? Would we too have been killed? We were too frightened and nauseated to eat the breakfast sitting on the table in front of us. In those days you didn't waste good food but we could not eat.

Father tried to assure us it was



nothing to worry about. He said that probably some wild dogs or wolves had done it. We didn't believe it and we could see he didn't believe it either. We had seen too many animals attacked by dogs and wolves. They always tore the animals apart. They didn't drink their blood.

I was always a nosy child, always eavesdropping when the grown-ups thought I was somewhere else, so I listened to my parents talking about the possible ways the steers could have been killed.

Had a neighbor killed them and been frightened away by the lights before he could cut it up? A neighbor would have had to shoot the animals and in that isolated country a shot could be heard half a mile away. If someone had punctured or cut the animals' throats, he first would have had to tie them up. There were no ropes. In any case, animals don't die at once when their throats are cut; the wounded animals would have bawled their heads off. The other cattle would have stampeded and made a terrible racket. We had heard nothing.

America was in the middle of a depression that summer and nobody would have left the animals' hide. A cowhide was worth about 50 cents—a day's wages for a man that year. If a neighbor had killed a steer, it would have been to feed his family. These carcasses were just left.

Furthermore, a beef has to be hung up in order for the blood to drain, not

left lying on the ground. That's what was so strange. How did the aliens, that's what they were, drain the blood? There was no blood anywhere; every drop was gone. Had this happened only to us or had they killed other stock in the area?

Later that week, when the newspapers came from St. Louis, we had our answer. There were several stories of just such incidents all over Missouri that night.<sup>\*</sup> People had seen the hovering lights and in each case only three animals were drained of blood no matter how many cattle were in the pasture. Where the saucers had hovered, grass was burned away by the heat of the object. In our pasture where the ground was burned, nothing ever grew again. The patch was bare. It still is as far as I know.

My father never spoke of that night again and he did not let the rest of us speak of it either.

*A note from Shannon Graham:*

I am certain that my grandmother Pearl Chenoweth's account of her 1896 UFO experience is an accurate one. At the time she related this story, she was dictating her memoirs for the Missouri Historical Society and was helping people with genealogical research. Everyone who worked with her was amazed at her accurate recall of dates, places and people. She was alert and active until her death in 1984.

<sup>\*</sup>A check of St. Louis newspapers for August and September 1896 uncovered no UFO-related stories.—*The Editors.*

#### A REAL SPEED FREAK

**D**RIVING AT speeds approaching 200 mph helped Al Unser, Sr., take eighth place August 19, 1984, in the 500-mile CART auto race at Pocono International Raceway. The next day the racing great won an \$82 ticket for speeding 75 mph on Interstate Route 80 in Pennsylvania.

was explained that fish in northern Wisconsin lakes grew fur like that to protect them from the cold weather. I think that I believed the story at the time. Some years later I ran across the same exhibit, or something very like it, and by then I had caught on to the joke.

## MUTILATIONS

The creatures that populate American tall tales have many sources. Some are the products of original imagination, and others are borrowed from far older legends, probably passed on as folk tales in Europe and then brought to the New World.

Typical of the genre of monster is the hodag, a man-eater of the Wisconsin swamps. The creature had huge claws, bulging eyes, large horns, and a line of sharp spikes which ran down its back. But the most unusual feature of the hodag was that it could never lie down, for it had no joints in its legs. It slept by leaning against a tree and the best way to catch one was to cut into its favorite tree so that when the hodag leaned against it to sleep, both monster and tree fell over.

This last characteristic was also attributed to the achlis, a creature mentioned in the works of the ancient Roman naturalist Pliny. Pliny had tried to be factual, but his works contain descriptions of many creatures that turned out to be mythical. Pliny's beast, unlike the man-eating hodag, was an inoffensive vegetarian. Whether the characteristic of being unable to lie down was carried straight from the pages of Pliny to the swamps of Wisconsin, or whether the hodag received his jointless legs as the result of independent invention is unknown.

A real live hodag was supposedly captured near Rhinelander, Wisconsin, in the late nineteenth century. The whole hodag capture was a hoax planned and executed by a

man named Eugene S. Shepard, who threw a spike studded horsehide over a large dog and then charged admission to see the "hodag" that was housed in a dimly lighted cage. When the story of the hodag's capture was sent to the newspapers the theory was advanced that the hodag was "the long sought missing link between the ichyosaurus and the mylodon of the Ice Age" -- a statement that is simply double talk.

According to Curtis D. MacDougall in his book *Hoaxes*, "after the original hodag's death a stuffed successor was exhibited at fairs for two years. Whenever a convention meets at Rhinelander the fame of the monster lives anew, stuffed hodags being manufactured for floats and other displays. Luke Sylvester Kearney in 1928 published a book *The Hodag*. W.J. Lemke, head of the news bureau of the University of Arkansas, states that during his boyhood at Wausau, Wisconsin, 'large photographs of the hodag on a fallen log, surrounded by a group of his captors armed with axes, pitchforks, etc., were fairly common. Many of them were used as decorations in the saloons.'"

Lemke could have found a very hardy monster in his own adopted state of Arkansas. This was the gowrow, so named because of the horrible growling noise it made. A copy of the *Arkansas Gazette* of Little Rock in 1897 mentions the killing of one of these creatures by a posse in Search County, Arkansas, after the monster had terrified the countryside, and killed off a large number of cows and horses. According to the paper, the creature was twenty feet long, with a ponderous head, two enormous tusks, short legs, webbed feet with claws, green scales, a back bristling with short horns, and long thin tail.

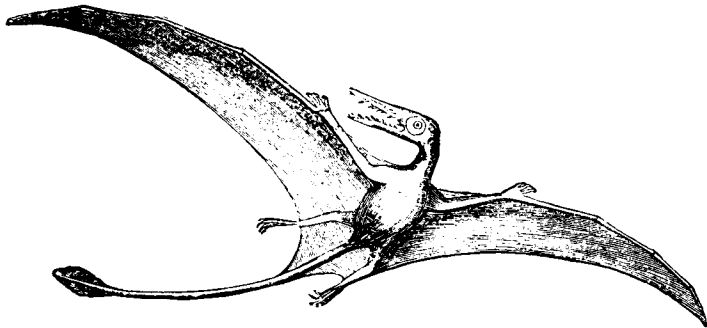
More widespread in America was belief in the hoop snake. This was

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showed the Africans a book with pictures of pterodactyls, they "immediately and unhesitatingly" identified them as kongamoto.

Chief Kapiji Mpangu Mwandwe assured Melland that one of these animals had been shot by a sportsman on safari, a "George Grey," in 1897 near Fort Jameson. While Melland does not identify "George Grey," perhaps thinking it unnecessary, the chief was probably referring to Albert Henry George Grey, the fourth Earl Grey, Administrator of Rhodesia from 1896 to 1897, and later Governor-General of Canada. If the Chief was "putting one over" on the Magistrate, he would hardly have implicated such an important person as the Administrator of the Colony.



The animal's habitat was alleged by the Africans to be the Jiunda Swamp, a desolate region shunned by Africans and Europeans alike. Melland wrote, "I have mentioned the Jiunda Swamp as one of the reputed haunts of the kongamoto, and I must say that the place itself is the very kind of place in which such a reptile might exist, if it were possible anywhere. Some fifty miles of swamp, formed by an inland delta... The whole of the swamp is covered with dense vegetation: big trees that grow to a great height, tangled undergrowth with matted creepers... Nowhere else on high well-drained ground have I seen such a morass: nor could one conjure up a more perfect picture of a haunted forest."

In size and appearance, Sanderson's olitiau matches Melland's kongamoto. Even the reddish color of kongamoto is suggestive, for Sanderson saw his animal in poor light and in darkness red can appear black, accounting, for example, for the blaze-orange clothing now required for hunters in many American states rather than the traditional red.

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The great distance between the Cameroon and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) poses little problem, for an animal such as kongamoto would be most likely to occur in small concentrated, and widely dispersed populations, hanging on in those few isolated spots where environment and proximity were suitable and far from human settlements or activity.

At the end of the last century, a young Englishman, H.G. Seeley, attended a lecture on fossil pterodactyls. He was so fascinated that he abandoned a promising legal career and devoted himself to the study of these creatures. The result was *Dragons of the Air*, published in New York and London in 1901.

Seeley set down all that was known of the pterodactyls in his day. Of the appearance of these creatures would present in life he wrote, "If this series of animals could all be brought together they would vary greatly in aspect and stature, as well as structure... These flying reptiles frequently have the proportions of the limbs similar to a bat." So, a living pterodactyl need not present the classic form we are used to from museum displays and horror films and might look much like a bat — accounting neatly for the vivid impression Sanderson received of the animal he saw in the Assumbo Mountains in 1932.

Seeley may have harbored some hope that pterodactyls could still survive, for he included in *Dragons of the Air* the following strangely prophetic words: "The final disappearance of these animals from the Earth's history... may yet be modified by future discoveries." Some future explorer of the Jiunda Swamp or the Assumbo Mountains may yet prove him right.

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spaventato il bestiame ed alcuni animali domestici. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucer on the Moon, p. 207).

**4 - Robertson County, Tennessee, U.S.A. tra il 1817 e il 1821.**

La fattoria di John Bell era, si dice, infestata dagli spiriti, con fenomeni di « poltergeist » e di « luci vaganti ». Tra i numerosi visitatori che si recarono a vedere la « casa degli spiriti » ci fu anche il generale Andrew Jackson. Quando egli si avvicinò alla casa su una carrozza tirata da cavalli, le ruote sembrarono immobilizzarsi all'improvviso e i cavalli furono incapaci di muoversi fino a quando una voce metallica e acuta non si fece sentire da dietro i cespugli: — Benissimo, generale. Che la carrozza avanzi! — e in quel momento le ruote si rimisero in movimento. (F.S.R. nov.dic. 1968, p. 16, John Keel: Is the « E.M. » effect a Myth?).

**5 - Horton, Wiltshire, Inghilterra Giugno 1857.**

Il giornale « Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette » del 2 luglio 1857, riferisce che un fattore, certo W. Brown, si stava dirigendo verso un « mulinello ». Non c'era alcun soffio d'aria, e le condizioni meteorologiche non erano tali da determinare un vero « mulinello ». Il cavallo ne fu ugualmente atterrito, si diede alla fuga e il Sig. Brown fu quasi gettato a terra. (F.S.R. nov.dic. 1966, p. 18).

**6 - Swaffham, Norfolk, Inghilterra 15 genn. 1869.**

Qualcosa veduto nel cielo e delle misteriose esplosioni, che non erano di origine meteorica, atterriscono centinaia di pecore. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

**7 - Bonham, Texas, U.S.A. 1873.**

Alcuni raccoglitori di cotone sono stati terrorizzati da un oggetto splendente come l'argento, piombato su di loro. — « Esso serpeggiava nel cielo come un grande rettile d'argento, dichiarò uno dei testimoni, e picchiava su di noi senza interruzione, continuamente ». — Un tiro di cavalli si diede alla fuga e il conducente fu gettato sotto le ruote e ucciso.

**7bis - Fort Riley, Texas, U.S.A. 1873.**

Lo stesso giorno, circa un'ora dopo

cosa o un oggetto simile piombò dal cielo sulle truppe di cavalleria a Fort Riley, mentre erano in piena parata. I cavalli ne furono terrorizzati a tal punto che la rivista terminò nel più grande caos. (Frank Edwards: Stranger Than Science, p. 198).

**8 - Berkshire, Inghilterra, 20 nov. 1887, 20,20.**

Un oggetto sconosciuto nel cielo e delle misteriose esplosioni provocarono la fuga di greggi su una superficie di circa 210 miglia quadrate. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

**9 - Valle del Tamigi, Inghilterra, notte del 13 novembre 1888.**

Alcune greggi si diedero alla fuga su un territorio di circa 22 mila miglia quadrate. Esse furono ritrovate la mattina seguente in lontane fattorie, ancora ansimanti di terrore e ammucchiate sotto alcune siepi. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

**10 - Chiltern Hills, Inghilterra, 25 ottobre 1889.**

Su una zona di circa 40 miglia quadrate alcune centinaia di pecore fuggirono contemporaneamente da alcuni recinti chiusi e da alcuni ovili. Il panico fu contagioso quantunque le fattorie e i recinti non fossero vicini, ma al contrario sparsi su diverse miglia. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on The Moon, p. 311).

**11 - Leroy, Kansas, U.S.A. 19 aprile 1897, 23,30.**

Gli Hamilton furono svegliati dal trambusto del loro bestiame e dei cani della casa. Essi uscirono e videro sopra le loro teste il « Vascello del Texas », che aveva legato con una corda una delle loro giovenche. (J. Vallée: Anatomy of a Phenomenon, p. 16).

**12 - Rockland, Texas, U.S.A. 22 aprile 1897, 23,30.**

A Rockland, Mr. John M. Barclay, essendosi ritirato per dormire, sentì il suo cane abbaiare furiosamente e nello stesso tempo con un tono lamentoso. Diede un'occhiata fuori e vide una grande macchina (il Vascello del

terra. Uscendo dalla macchina, un uomo s'avviò verso di lui chiedendogli dell'olio lubrificante, uno scalpello temprato e del solfato di rame. Barclay gli domandò da dove venisse e dove andasse. « Da ogni dove, ma saremo in Grecia dopodomani », fu la risposta del misterioso essere. (D. B. Hanlon and J. Vallée: Airships Over Texas, F.S.R. gen.-feb. '67, p. 23).

**13 - Dallas, Texas, U.S.A. aprile 1897.**

Il « Dallas News » del 28 aprile 1897 ha pubblicato un articolo di un testimone anonimo (un uomo di legge), che stava per mettersi alla guida del suo calessino tirato da un cavallo, di notte, allorché il « Vascello » gli passò sopra la testa. Il cavallo sbuffò, indietreggiò e caracolò pazzamente, rovesciando quasi la vettura; poi rimase immobile, tremando come una foglia. (D. B. Hanlon: Texas Odyssey of 1897; F.S.R. set.-ott. 1966, p. 8).

**14 - Hot Springs, Arkansas, USA; notte del 6 maggio 1897.**

Due ufficiali di polizia, Sumpter e McLemore, provarono ad avvicinarsi ad un U.F.O. che era atterrato, ma i loro cavalli rifiutarono di avvicinarsi oltre i cento metri. (Jerome Clark: The strange case of the 1897 Airship, F.S.R. luglio-agosto 1966, p. 15).

**15 - Seal Rocks, Sutro Heights, San Francisco, U.S.A., 22 novembre 1897.**

Il « Vascello » è passato sopra la Cliff House ed ha proiettato un potente fascio luminoso su Seal Rocks (Le Rocce delle Foche); le foche furono prese dal panico e si gettarono in acqua. (Lore and Denault: Mysteries of the Skies, p. 7).

**16 - Marais, sull'estuario del Tamigi, Inghilterra 1901.**

Ancora panico tra le greggi. Esse partirono tutte verso Ovest, allontanandosi dal Mar del Nord. (H. T. Wilkins: Flying Saucers on the Moon; p. 311).

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# L'AERONAVE E LA VACCA

di robert j. m. rickard

Una delle storie più importanti del catechismo ufologico è quella dell'aeronave che si librò sulla fattoria di Alexander Hamilton, nel Kansas, la sera del 19 aprile 1897.

Riproduciamo integralmente il resoconto apparso sull'edizione del 23 aprile del settimanale Farmers Advocate, pubblicato a Yates Center.

"L'Onorevole Alexander Hamilton di Vernon è venuto in città mercoledì scorso /il 21 aprile/ creando una certa agitazione con l'annunciare d'aver avuto un'esperienza con l'aeronave, di cui si parla molto. Il signor Hamilton è un vecchio colono, è stato membro dell'assemblea legislativa in passato ed è noto per tutte le contee di Woodson, Allen, Coffey ed Anderson. L'onorevole ci ha raccontato la seguente storia:

"La notte di lunedì scorso, verso le dieci e mezza, venimmo svegliati da rumori provenienti dalla mandria. Io mi alzai pensando che forse il mio bulldog ne stava combinando qualcuna delle sue, ma arrivato alla porta osservai con mia indicibile sorpresa un'aeronave che stava scendendo lentamente sulla mia mandria, a circa 40 metri dalla casa.

"Dopo aver chiamato il mio aiutante Gid Heslip e mio figlio Wall, brandendo delle asce corremmo al corral. Nel frattempo l'aeronave era dolcemente scesa fino a circa 30 metri da terra, e a non più di 50 metri da noi. Consisteva d'una grande porzione sigariforme lunga forse 100 metri e di un carro attaccato sotto.

"Il carro era fatto di pannelli di vetro o di qualche altra sostanza trasparente, divisi da strisce sottili di qualche altro materiale. L'interno era brillantemente illuminato e si vedeva chiaramente tutto. C'erano tre luci: una come un immenso riflettore e due più piccole, una rossa ed una verde. Quella grande poteva essere fatta ruotare in tutte le direzioni.

"Era occupato da sei degli esseri più strani che io abbia mai visto. C'erano due uomini, una donna e tre bambini. Stavano ciarlando fra loro ma non riuscimmo a capire una parola di ciò che dissero. Tutte le parti del vascello aereo che non erano trasparenti erano d'un colore rossastro scuro.

"Rimanemmo ammutoliti per lo stupore e la paura, finché un qualche rumore attrasse la loro attenzione ed essi puntarono il

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riflettore su di noi. Appena ci videro, misero in moto una qualche ignota forza ed una grande ruota di turbina di circa 10 metri di diametro che stava girando lentamente sotto l'aeronave cominciò a ronzare con lo stesso suono del cilindro d'una scrematrice, e l'apparecchio si sollevò con la leggerezza d'un uccello.

"Quando si trovò a circa 30 metri sopra di noi, sembrò fermarsi, e si librò proprio sopra ad una giovenca di tre anni che mugiva e recalcitrava apparentemente imprigionata in una staccionata. Dirigendosi verso di lei scoprimmo che aveva un cavo dello spessore d'un dito, della stessa sostanza rossa, annodato a capio intorno al collo dell'animale, e proveniente dall'aeronave e impigliato nel filo spinato.

"Tentammo di spezzare il cavo o di liberarlo, ma non ci riuscimmo, così tagliammo il filo spinato e rimanemmo a bocca aperta a guardare nave, vacca e tutto sollevarsi lentamente ed allontanarsi scomparendo verso nordovest. Tornammo a casa, ma ero così spaventato che non presi sonno, e martedì mattina mi alzai, montai a cavallo ed uscii in cerca di qualche traccia della mia bestia. Tornando da LeRoy a sera scoprii che Lank Thomas, che vive nella contea di Coffee a circa tre o quattro miglia ad ovest di LeRoy, aveva trovato la pelle, le zampe e la testa nel suo campo, quella mattina.

"Pensando che qualcuno aveva macellato una bestia rubata e aveva gettato via la carcassa, egli aveva portato i resti in città perché fossero identificati, ma era rimasto molto sorpreso di non trovare alcuna traccia sul terreno soffre tutt'intorno. L'altra notte son tornato a casa ma tutte le volte che sto per addormentarmi vedo di nuovo quella cosa maledetta con le sue grandi luci e quelle orrende persone. Non so se erano diavoli o angeli o cose d'altro, ma noi tutti l'abbiamo vista e tutta la mia famiglia ha visto la nave e non voglio aver più a che fare con loro."

Il resoconto del Farmers Advocate continuava:

"Il signor Hamilton ha tutta l'apparenza di non essersi interamente ripreso dallo shock e tutti quelli che lo conoscono sono rimasti convinti che è stato sincero in ogni parola.

Ma dal momento che ci sono ora, come sempre ci sono stati e sempre ci saranno, scettici ed increduli ogniqualvolta viene esposta la verità su qualcosa che confina con l'improbabile, sapendo che qualche persona ignorante o sospettosa dubiterà della sincerità della dichiarazione sopraesposta;

quindi, noi, i sottoscritti, facciamo la seguente dichiarazione firmata:

che abbiamo conosciuto Alex Hamilton chi per quindici chi per trenta anni, e che per quel che riguarda la sua sincerità e verità non abbiamo mai sentito mettere in dubbio la sua parola, e che noi crediamo fermamente che la sua dichiarazione sia vera

ed esatta.

E. V. Wharton, Ispettore Petrolifero Statale

H. H. Winter, Banchiere

H. S. Johnson, Farmacista

Alex Stewart, Giudice di Pace

F. W. Butler, Droghiere

H. C. Rollins, Direttore dell'Ufficio Postale

M. E. Hunt, Sceriffo

E. K. Kellenberser, Dottore

J. H. Sticher, Droghiere

Jas. L. Martin, Direttore dell'Ufficio del Registro

"Sottoscritto e giurato davanti a me questo ventunesimo giorno di aprile, 1897. W. C. Willie, Notaio Pubblico".

Dopo aver riprodotto integralmente la storia di Hamilton, il Daily News di Burlington pubblicò un'altra dichiarazione firmata:

"Noi, i sottoscritti, residenti di Burlington nel Kansas, certifichiamo con la presente che abbiamo conosciuto il signor Alexander Hamilton fin da quando venne espulso dal Missouri in quanto coinvolto nella controversia tra schiavisti e antischiavisti; che egli è stato il primo Cancelliere della Contea di Coffee; che egli è sotto tutti i punti di vista un uomo perfettamente sincero e credibile. E nessuno che sia amante della verità metterà mai in dubbio una qualsiasi dichiarazione di lui.

J. M. Lane, H. E. Cowgill, Orson Kent, Wm. Manson, M. E. Grimes, J. M. Baldwin, David Grimes.

"Sottoscritto e giurato davanti a me questo ventinove d'aprile, 1897. H. B. Cheney, Notaio Pubblico".

A parte il vigile occhio di Charles Fort, che scrisse anche una lettera ad Alexander Hamilton, chiedendo ulteriori dettagli, senza ricevere alcuna risposta, nessun altro studioso dell'insolito ha disturbato il sonno di questo rapporto, nei polverosi archivi della redazione del Farmers Advocate.

Ma col nascere del fenomeno "dischi volanti", sempre maggior interesse venne prestato dagli "ufologi" ai casi del passato che sembravano implicare una presenza extraterrestre in tutta la storia del nostro pianeta.

Il primo riferimento al caso Hamilton lo troviamo in una conferenza tenuta nel 1960 dal dottor Joseph Allen Hynek. Ma il vero scopritore del "calf-napping" è senz'altro stato il dottor Jacques Vallée, che pubblicò per intero la storia nel suo secondo libro (1). La storia destò l'interesse d'un gruppo di ricercatori, e portò alla "scoperta" di tutto il flap del 1896-97.

Da allora, la storia è sempre stata ritenuta di grande importanza nello studio dell'aspetto ufologico delle "aeronavi", sia per la correlazione UFO-rapimenti d'animali (di cui questo caso sarebbe il predecessore) sia per la descrizione dei "sei esseri



dei più strani mai visti".

La maggior parte degli studiosi, da quelli cautamente scettici a quelli apertamente e acriticamente 'credenti' nel racconto, è poi sempre rimasta impressionata dai dettagli della storia, dal l'imponente dichiarazione firmata da una decina delle persone più in vista della contea, e dal fatto che la storia è stata apparentemente investigata e riportata tante volte senza che mai nessuno abbia mai trovato un motivo fondato per dubitare della sua veridicità, data anche la posizione di grande rispetto di cui godeva Hamilton nella sua comunità. (2)

Affascinato, come molti, dalla storia dell'aeronave, Jerome Clark, uno dei più noti esponenti dell'ufologia americana, fu spinto a rintracciare qualche parente di Alexander Hamilton (deceduto nel 1912), e trovò Elisabeth Hamilton Linde, figlia del Wallace che secondo l'Advocate era presente al fatto.

La signora Linde gli disse che alla sua famiglia piaceva credere che la storia fosse vera, che erano a conoscenza dei resoconti pubblicati e che tutti si ricordavano di Alex come d'un uomo dotato d'una straordinaria immaginazione. Benché non avesse mai sentito parlare né il padre né il nonno della "leggenda di famiglia", Elisabeth ricordava d'aver sentito dire parecchi anni prima da amici del nonno che la storia era stata architettata da Alex e dal direttore del Farmers Advocate.

Le cose rimasero comunque com'erano, e la storia del "rapimento della vacca" continuò ad apparire su giornali, riviste e libri specializzati. (3)

All'inizio del 1976, uno studioso inglese, Robert Schadewald, scrisse alla Kansas State Historical Society a proposito del caso e ricevette in risposta un ritaglio del Buffalo Enterprise (un settimanale del Kansas) del 28 gennaio 1943. La settimana precedente lo Yates Center News aveva riproposto ai suoi lettori la storia di Hamilton, ed in seguito a ciò l'Enterprise ricevette una lettera da Ben Hudson, direttore del Fredonia Daily Herald e figlio di F. Hudson, amico intimo di Hamilton e direttore del Farmers Advocate nel 1897. Nella lettera l'Hudson figlio affermava che "Hamilton e papà inventarono la storia durante una discussione, un sabato", ed includeva la seguente dichiarazione firmata da suo padre:

"Avevo acquistato un motorino a benzina, il



Una delle ricostruzioni in chiave ufologica del caso Hamilton. La vignetta fa parte d'una popolare storia dell'ufologia a fumetti distribuita (dietro abbonamento) ai giornali americani col titolo di "Our Space Age" dall'ufologo Otto Binder. La vignetta qui riprodotta apparve nella settimana del 26 febbraio 1968.

primo, credo, che si fosse mai visto a Yates Center, e l'avevo installato al giornale per far andare le rotative. Invitai alcuni amici a vederlo funzionare, e fra loro era Hamilton, il quale vedendolo esclamò: "Ora si potrà volare", e di qui venne fuori la storia che ci inventammo. Dopo che io la pubblicai, fu ripresa dai più importanti giornali sia americani che europei, alcuni dei quali la illustrarono con disegni immaginari. Ci furono poi centinaia di richieste d'informazioni provenienti da tutto il mondo. Qualche anno dopo ci furono i primi esperimenti di volo, ma io ho sempre reputato Alex Hamilton il vero inventore del volo umano".

Il ritaglio venne passato a me, ed io lo inviai a Jerome Clark, che fece pubblicare una lettera sullo Yates Center News il 16 settembre 1976, chiedendo informazioni sul caso.

In risposta, Jerry ricevette una lettera dalla signora Donna Steeby, di Wichita, la cui madre 93enne, Ethel Howard Shaw (amica d'una delle figlie di Hamilton, Nell) ricordava d'aver sentito raccontare la storia da Alex Hamilton in persona. In una seconda lettera la Steeby inviò la seguente dichiarazione firmata dalla madre:

"Ricordo benissimo quello splendido pomeriggio, come se fosse stato ieri. Allora aveva 14 anni, ed ero in casa Hamilton con la moglie e la figlia di Alex, quando egli tornò dal paese, mise il calesse nella stalla, si sedette nel soggiorno e incominciò subito a raccontare alla moglie: "Ho inventato una di quelle storie... e l'ho raccontata ai ragazzi, giù in città; verrà fuori sull'Advocate di questa settimana". Sembrava parecchio eccitato da ciò che aveva fatto, ma la moglie era piuttosto scandalizzata mentre lui raccontava, e di tanto in tanto diceva "Oh, Alex!" e "Perché, Alex?", ma noi ragazze non ci facemmo molto caso, dato che in fondo era una bella storia.

"Mentre tornavo a casa però ci pensai un po' sopra e raccontai tutto ai miei, che non ci diedero peso e mi dissero: "Non farci caso; è solo un'altra delle sue storie". Si diceva infatti che avessero formato un club fra amici e l'avessero chiamato "Ananias". Si riunivano di tanto in tanto e ciascuno raccontava la storia più grossa che s'era inventato dall'ultima volta. Per quel che mi ricordo, il club venne sciolto subito dopo che la storia dell'aeromane e della vacca venne fuori. Credo proprio che li abbia battuti tutti, ed in ogni caso gli Hamilton s'acquistarono un posto nella storia della contea".

Clark informò della cosa la nipote di Hamilton, chiedendo il suo parere. La signora sembrò riluttante a smentire la divertente "leggenda della famiglia", ma disse: "Se lei dice che è così, deve essere così".

Alcuni ufologi hanno obiettato che queste dichiarazioni sono a loro volta un falso, ma Jerome non lo crede. "E' straordinariamente improbabile che la signora Shaw ed il signor Hudson abbia-

no mentito entrambi. A che scopo poi? Un corrispondente mi ha suggerito che l'hanno fatto per "salvare il buon nome degli Hamilton". Ma, come dice mia moglie, non sarebbe un po' tardi farlo adesso? E se poi fosse proprio così, perché a farlo dovrebbero essere il defunto Hudson e la Shaw, e non un discendente diretto come la signora Hamilton-Linde, la quale vorrebbe invece credere all'"incidente"? Per di più, che razza di tentativo di salvare il buon nome della famiglia sarebbe, se si ammette che il patriarca era un bugiardo?"

Inoltre ci sono troppe persone, troppo lontane fra loro nel tempo e nello spazio, coinvolte in questo "smascheramento". La verità è che molte persone sono arrivate ad avere un'incrollabile fede in quella che è stata definita "la storia più convincente di tutta la saga ufologica", e si rifiutano di credere che possa essere un falso.

Un esempio di questa tendenza è la reazione di John Keel: "Adesso siamo proprio nei guai. E' sempre stata la storia migliore di tutte quelle del 1897. Se crolla questa, possiamo seriamente mettere in dubbio tutti gli altri casi".

A mio parere, questo dovrebbe essere fatto comunque, se veramente vogliamo approssimarci alla verità.

Basta guardare Hamilton: con credenziali impeccabili, amante degli scherzi, e capace di convincere 10 dei suoi amici, tutte persone di grande responsabilità di Le Roy e Yates Center, a firmare una dichiarazione sulla sua veridicità.

Possiamo ben dire che lo scherzo è stato fatto a tutti noi che ci abbiamo creduto.

Ed è stato uno scherzo riuscito.



Disegno di C.B.Vos da UFO Information n.1, 1973

#### NOTE

1. Jacques Vallée, "Anatomy of a Phenomenon", 1965.
2. Per un "curriculum" completo delle referenze e delle credenziali di Hamilton vedere Gordon Lore & Harold Denault, "Mysteries of the Skies".
3. Fra le innumerevoli fonti ufologiche da notare Frank Edwards "Flying Saucers - Serious Business" (tr.it. "La verità sui dischi volanti"); Lucius Parish su Fate, aprile 66; Jerome Clark su FSR vol.12 n.4, agosto 66; J.Clark su Fate, febbraio 77.

FSR

brightly lighted within and everything was plainly visible - it was occupied by six of the strangest beings I ever saw. They were jabbering together but we could not understand a word they said.

"Every part of the vessel which was not transparent was of a dark reddish color. We stood mute with wonder and fright. Then some noise attracted their attention and they turned a light directly upon us. Immediately on catching sight of us they turned on some unknown power, and a great turbine wheel, about thirty feet in diameter, which was revolving slowly below the craft, began to buzz and the vessel rose lightly as a bird. When about three hundred feet above us it seemed to pause and to hover directly above a two-year-old heifer, which was bawling and jumping, apparently fast in the fence. Going to her, we found a cable about half an inch in thickness made of some red material fastened in a slip knot around her neck and going up to the vessel from the heifer tangled in the wire fence. We tried to get it off but could not, so we cut the wire loose to see the ship, heifer and all, rise slowly, disappearing in the northwest.

"We went home but I was so frightened I could not sleep. Rising early Tuesday I started out on my horse, hoping to find some trace of my cow. This I failed to do, but coming back in the evening found that Link Thomas, about three or four miles west of LeRoy, had found the hide, legs and head in his field that day. He, thinking that someone had butchered a stolen beast, had brought the hide to town for identification, but was greatly mystified in not being able to find any tracks in the soft ground. After identifying the hide by my brand, I went home. But every time I would drop to sleep I would see the cursed thing, with its big lights and hideous people. I don't know whether they are devils or angels, or what; but we all saw them, and my whole family saw the ship, and I don't want any more to do with them." Dated April 2, 1987

There follows the affidavit signed by 10 prominent citizens of the county as to Hamilton's veracity and that Hamilton had been a member of the House of Representatives.

What better eye-witness could any court ask? Farmers also are good judges of size and distance because of constant observation of fields, animals and wildlife.

The case is somewhat like the celebrated Snippy the horse's death in Colorado a few years back, and also a series of incidents near the author's hometown of Hartington, Neb., a few years ago. Farmers found dead cattle with strange mutilations, and also observed strange lights in the sky at night.

The mutilations were never solved. People thought weird cultists from Sioux City or Omaha killed the cattle, and the

lights were on helicopters, which have been used here for cattle rustling. But thinking back now, I'm not so sure.

The year 1897 continued active for sightings, every night in May bringing reports from somewhere. Near Aurora, Tex., one airship supposedly crashed. Recent investigations of fragments of metals found near the site brought forth nothing strange about the metal.

What and who were in our skies in 1897 is uncertain; what is certain is that it was the first "UFO flap" in American history.

## 1890s

(Continued from Page One)

watch. Observers on the hills nearby saw fins on the craft, estimated its length at 180 feet, its diameter at 50 feet and said red, white and green lights flashed on and off as the ship sped up.

Meanwhile, the most fantastic of all observations was occurring outside the little eastern Kansas town of LeRoy. LeRoy is 220 miles south of Villisca, Ia., and 240 miles southeast of Clay Center, Neb.

A prominent farmer, Alexander Hamilton, in a sworn statement co-signed by 10 prominent citizens, said:

"Last Monday night about 10:30 we were awakened by a noise among the cattle. I arose, thinking that perhaps my bulldog was performing his pranks, but upon going to the door saw to my utter astonishment that an airship was slowly descending upon my cow lot, about forty rods (660 feet) from the house.

"Calling my tenant, Gid Heslip, and my son Wall, we seized some axes and ran to the corral. Meanwhile the ship had been gently descending until it was not more than thirty feet above the ground, and we came within fifty yards of it.

"It consisted of a great cigar-shaped portion, possibly three hundred feet long, with a carriage underneath. The carriage was made of glass or some other transparent substance alternating with a narrow strip of some material. It was

## The 1890s "Flap"

By Jerry Mathes

(Continued from the December, 1976 issue)

Then came sightings in Perry, Okla. and many cities in Texas, while other ships were seen in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and West Virginia.

The night of April 16, for example Benton, Tex., citizens saw a cigar-shaped ship cross between them and the moon.

On April 19 at Sistersville, W. Va., bit past 9 p.m., a luminous red object shaped like an immense cigar approached from Ohio (to the northwest). When it flashed at least two extremely brilliant searchlights on the little town, the sawmill whistle brought everyone out to

(See 1890s - page Five)

APRO, JAN-77

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(H)

Saucer Reader. The final two chapters deal with the famous (?) Capt. Peter Killian sighting, Feb. 24, 1959 (14 years ago). He was told it was a tanker re-fueling operation. He claimed the three objects he saw over Ohio were 3 TIMES THE SIZE OF ANY TANKER OR BOMBER.

Your article claiming the "saucers" are domestic products, piloted by midgets, IS AS ABSURD AS ALL THE OTHER "SECRET WEAPON" EXPLANATIONS. Argosy magazine showed what I consider extremely bad taste when they ran a similar article last summer while our boys were on the moon.

The author's listing of patent numbers means nothing. We have a 15 year old lad here in town who built his own laser this winter, with \$75 worth of equipment. All these TV movies are preceded by a long list of names also, in case an Oscar is mentioned. I saw a "toy flying saucer" on the Johnny Carson show, that just barely cleared the floor with an adult riding it.

I remember Henry J. Taylor on the radio, reassuring the God-fearin' people they were built in Maryland, No sane man "swallowed" it then; even less so the past two decades. How many midgets would have to be employed to account for the MILLIONS of sightings, over a MILLENIUM of time?

WE HAVE NO TROUBLE

"CRAMMING" THREE MEN IN OUR SPACE CAPSULES.

A bright light was seen high in the sky on the eve of my last birthday, over the Ohio River. TV weather men attributed it to the setting sun (7:30 P.M.) on two layers of clouds—seen over a 4 state area? Another miniature sun was seen on the Louisville to Chicago flight, a few nights later. (Another "interstate meteor"?)

That elderly lady's "flying cucumber" report in FATE, isn't too far removed in time and space from my own father's sighting at the turn of the century. He was watching his mother hang out a wash, when this little frame-work contraption, resembling a garage that hasn't been sided yet, WITH A LITTLE GUY HUDDLED IN ONE CORNER AT THE CONTROLS, come gliding silently over the old homeplace.

The surviving witnesses of the '97' flap must all have vivid memories of those unforgettable days. The sense of "awe and wonder" was still strong in men, then. It's hard to excite anyone with something worthwhile, anymore.

Reese Mikel  
P.O. 92  
Alexandria, Ind.

Dear Mr. Palmer:

On the night of the moon launch, April 16, 1972, there occurred a particular phenomenon which might interest you or your readers. The

FS, SPRING-73

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Ne fa fede la seguente dichiarazione sotto giuramento rilasciata davanti a un notaio il 21 aprile 1897:

"Hamilton risiede da molto tempo nel Kansas ed è conosciuto dappertutto nelle contee di Woodson, Allen, Coffery e Anderson. Egli è stato membro della Camera dei Rappresentanti. Ha giurato sull'onore che la sua storia è vera.

"Siccome vi sono, vi sono stati e vi saranno sempre degli scettici e degli increduli per mettere in dubbio la verità di tutto ciò che rasenta l'inverosimile, e sapendo che ci saranno ignoranti e sospettosi che dubiteranno della veridicità della suddetta dichiarazione noi sottoscritti facciamo qui appresso la dichiarazione sotto giuramento:

"Che noi conosciamo Alessandro Hamilton da uno a trenta anni e che per quanto riguarda la verità e la veridicità noi non abbiamo mai inteso mettere in dubbio la sua parola e che noi siamo veramente convinti che la sua dichiarazione è vera ed esatta, firmato: E. W. Wharton, ispettore dei petroli dello Stato.

M. H. HUNT, sceriffo

W. LAUBER, sceriffo aggiunto

H. H. WINTER, banchiere

H. S. JOHNSON, farmacista

J. H. STITCHER, avvocato

Alexander STEWART, giudice di pace

F. W. BUTLER, droghista

James W. MARTIN, cancelliere

e H. C. ROLLINS, ricevitore postale (vedi on citata)

ATTERRAGGIO IN AMERICA IN UNA FATTORIA NEL 1897

1.896-97

Un ricco coltivatore di Le Roy (Kansas), Alessandro Hamilton, in una dichiarazione fatta sotto giuramento il 21 aprile 1897, racconta:

La sera di lunedì scorso, verso le 10,30, eravamo stati risvegliati dalle bestie che facevano rumore. Pensando che era, senza dubbio, il mio bulldog mi alzai, ma, aprendo la porta, io vidi, con mio grande sbalordimento, un vascello aereo discendere lentamente nel mio prato, a circa 200 metri dalla casa.

"Chiamai il mio fattore, Gid Keskip, e mio figlio Wall e, impugnando delle asce, corremmo verso il cortile. Nel frattempo il vascello era disceso dolcemente fino a una decina di metri dal suolo. Noi ci avvicinammo a meno di 50 metri.

"Esso era a forma di sigaro di cento metri di lunghezza circa, con un carrello al di sotto. Questo carrello era di vetro o di un'altra materia trasparente con alternate strette bande di materia opaca. Era brillantemente illuminato nell'interno e tutto era perfettamente visibile: era occupato da sei esseri, i più strani che io abbia mai visti. Parlavano fra loro, ma io non potetti capire una parola di ciò che essi dicevano.

"Tutte le parti del vascello che non erano trasparenti erano di colore rosso cupo. Restammo muti dallo stupore e dalla paura. Poi un rumore attirò la loro attenzione ed essi diressero un faro dritto su di noi. Appena ci videro, essi accesero non si sa quale fonte di energia ed una grande ruota di turbine, di circa 10 metri di diametro, che girava lentamente al di sopra dell'ordigno, si mise a rombare e il vascello si alzò lentamente come un uccello. Quando fu a un cento metri sopra di noi, sembrò fermarsi e restare sospeso proprio al di sopra di una giovenca di due anni che muggiva e saltava e che sembrava attaccata al recinto. Andammo verso di essa e notammo una fune, spessa circa un centimetro, di una materia rossa che faceva un cappio intorno al collo della bestia e aveva l'altra estremità legata al vascello. Noi tentammo di cacciar fuori la bestia dal nodo, ma, non riuscendovi, tagliammo il filo dal recinto e vedemmo il vascello e la giovenca elevarsi lentamente e scomparire verso nord-ovest.

"Rientrammo, ma io ero così spaventato che non potetti dormire. Il martedì mi alzai presto e mi recai a cavallo per tentare di ritrovare la mia bestia. Non trovai nulla ma, rientrando la sera, scoprii che Link Thomas, che abita a cinque o sei chilometri da Le Roy, aveva trovato lo stesso giorno, nel suo campo, la pelle, i piedi e la testa. Pensando che qualcuno avesse sgozzato una bestia rubata, egli aveva portato la pelle in città per farla identificare, ma era rimasto assai sbalordito di non trovare alcuna impronta sul suolo morbido. Avendo identificato la pelle grazie a un mio contrassegno, rientrai a casa mia. Ma, ogni volta che mi addormentavo, vedevo questa dannata cosa con le sue grosse luci e gli esseri orribili. Non sapevo se questi sono dei demoni o degli angeli, ma noi li abbiamo tutti visti e tutta la mia famiglia ha visto il vascello ed io non voglio più

"WATKERS"

1.897

CELESTES EN EL S.

Un interesante caso, que destaca entre los avistamientos de naves extraterrestres sobre Estados Unidos durante 1896-97, es el de un supuesto robo de ganado efectuado desde una nave suspendida sobre LeRoy, Kansas. Durante el incidente un prospero granjero, llamado Alejandro Hamilton, y otros dos testigos, presenciaron cómo un gigantesco Objeto Volador No Identificado descendía sobre su granja la noche del 19 de abril de 1897. Los ocupantes del vehículo lanzaron una vaquilla y luego la nave se elevó y alejó flotando con su presa. Al día siguiente se encontraron pedazos del animal en un campo cercano.

Esto fue ampliamente divulgado por revistas y periódicos especializados en el asunto de los platillos voladores. Durante mucho se supuso que era el único suceso de tal naturaleza en ese tiempo, pero actualmente ya se tiene noticia de un suceso similar.

#### UN INCIDENTE SIMILAR

A principios de 1978 quien esto escribe comenzó a coleccionar informes de naves extrañas como parte de un proyecto de investigación conjunta con el ufólogo canadiense Howard Gontovnick, de UFO Canadá, organización especializada en el fenómeno. Mientras revisaba un montón de viejos periódicos maltratados y sin encuadernar, descubrí un relato muy similar al episodio de LeRoy, Kansas. El artículo se encontraba en la edición del 20 de mayo de 1897 del *Minonk Dispatch*, un pequeño semanario del centro de Illinois.

El encabezado era "Nave Espacial que Roba un Novillo", y decía: "Un vagabundo que fue encarcelado la otra noche relató que una nave espacial robó un novillo de dos años en la granja de John Geisert, en Peoria. El vagabundo, que estaba pasando la noche con los Geisert dijo que el bramido del ganado los despertó. Cuando salieron vieron un gran objeto, con luces brillantes, suspendido sobre el corral de las vacas. Geisert y su hijo corrieron hacia él, gritando y hacha en mano.

"La nave se elevó llevándose un novillo atado al extremo de una cuerda. Al día siguiente Geisert

encontró la piel del animal como a diez millas al sur de su granja. El dice que la nave era como de 300 pies de largo\*, y a bordo se encontraban tres hombres y mujeres y dos niños.

"Evidentemente había sido día de lavado a bordo de la nave pues las mujeres estaban recogiendo ropas de un tendedero. Uno de los hombres tenía un acordeón y estaba tocando".

Este artículo apareció en un periódico de poca circulación, el *Pekin Times* que se editaba en Pekin, Illinois, que ya no existe.

#### ENORMES COINCIDENCIAS

La información es menos detallada y más reducida que la del relato de LeRoy aparecido en el *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* el 21 de abril de 1897. (Dos días después apareció en el *Yates Center Farmer's Advocate*), pero los dos artículos coinciden en varios puntos importantes.

Los tres testigos del incidente de Peoria fueron despertados por "los bramidos del ganado"; de la misma forma, hubo "ruidos entre el ganado" como a las 10:30 de la noche que pusieron sobre aviso a los testigos, que también eran tres, en el episodio de LeRoy, Kansas.

Las descripciones de los vehículos aéreos son prácticamente idénticas. El relato de Illinois habla de "un objeto largo con luces brillantes... como de 100 metros de largo"; Alexander Hamilton testificó que la nave vista sobre su granja en Kansas estaba "brillantemente iluminada", con "una parte en forma de puro, posiblemente de 100 metros de largo", que llevaba una "canastilla" en la parte de abajo. Las dos naves llevaban pasajeros.

El suceso de Peoria terminó cuando "la nave se elevó llevándose a un novillo de dos años atado al extremo de una cuerda". En Kansas, "una vaquilla de tres años" fue levantada con un cable como de media pulgada de diámetro... amarrada con un nudo corredizo alrededor del cuello, e introducida dentro de la nave. Hamilton y los testigos vieron desaparecer la nave en el oscuro cielo de la noche.

Un conocido del señor Hamil-

\*Unos cien metros.

ton recobró "piel, patas y cabeza" de la res robada la noche anterior, como a "tres millas al oeste de LeRoy". Los restos fueron localizados en un campo de tierra suelta en, el que no se apreciaron huellas o pisadas: De acuerdo al resumen del *Minonk Dispatch*, la "piel" del novillo robado apareció como a diez millas del condado de Peoria.

#### LA MUSICA DE LOS CIELOS

Incluso las reacciones de los observadores fueron similares. En ambos relatos las personas empuñaban hachas. Posiblemente éstas fueron las armas que encontraron más a mano al salir de la casa.

De la extraña música de acordeón que se menciona en el incidente del condado de Peoria no se tiene noticia en el relato de Kansas. Sin embargo, los lectores familiarizados con los avistamientos de 1890 saben que las melodías de los navegantes de las alturas son un aspecto misterioso, y muchas veces importante, dentro de las características de esas naves.

Finalmente, los relatos coinciden en que son el único caso conocido de robo de animales vivos desde objetos voladores. El relato del condado de Peoria fue descubierto por casualidad; tal vez otros relatos similares se encuentren escondidos entre montones de periódicos viejos esperando sólo ser descubiertos.

No se conoce la fecha exacta del incidente de Peoria. La noticia sugiere que probablemente sucedió en la primera mitad del mes de mayo, pocas semanas después del incidente de Kansas, como a 350 millas de distancia.

Con el paso de los años resulta extremadamente difícil declararse a favor o en contra de la validez de estos relatos, especialmente cuando sólo se cuenta con una publicación y sin ninguna otra clase de evidencia; testigos presenciales, relatos verbales —cualquier cosa— que refuerza la investigación. Los intentos para localizar a alguna persona del clan Geisert han sido infructuosos. Los Geisert, el vagabundo desconocido y el objeto volador, se han desvanecido en el tiempo.

Sólo nos queda un testimonio de prensa, amarillento, y su susurro de misterio.



1.896-97

## MYSTERIOUS AIRSHIPS: COMMENTARY II

By Louis Winkler, Ph. D.\*  
(MUFON Consultant in Astronomy)

The commentary made by Don Berliner (No. 169, March 1982) regarding my article on the Mysterious Airships of 1896-7 is instructive and stimulating. Both of our write-ups appeared in the March issue. His comments provide an aviation history reference which is needed in this most complex UFO flap.

Although Berliner indicates the article was "thorough," this is not the case. As I mentioned, it is only a

\*Research for this commentary was supported in part by the Fund for UFO Research

sampling of the mountain of data appearing in newspapers regarding balloons and airships. Much of these data concern accidents and deaths resulting from experiments, and are presently ignored both by ufologists and historians of aviation. From the dozens of articles I found in just the *New York Times* and *New York Tribune* over the period 1887-1897, I estimate the general data on balloons and airships are at least ten times more abundant than the data on the 1896-7 airship sightings.

It is important to note that Berliner and I have different perspectives in

our discussions. While he is concerned with details of the technical and logistical aspects of the craft, I am only concerned with demonstrating that a number of craft were in the air for sustained periods and over many places during 1896-7 period. In this way I hope to show that some of the 1896-7 airship sightings were man-made, rather than conclusively established details of the complex early stages of aviation history in America.

It appears that Berliner chooses to disbelieve or ignore the vast majority  
(Continued on next page)

### Oregon, Continued

nocturnal lights several times near Gray Butte. Often a single very bright, whitish light with a reddish glow to it would appear toward or in front of the crest of the butte, hover, move up and down, and then travel straight up and angle off, streaking over the horizon. Sighting duration—approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Hawkins' brother checked with the Redmond, Oregon, air center several times to determine if aircraft activity was a source for the lights; however, no helicopters were reported operating in the area.

At this time, Hawkins also learned that other law enforcement officers had encounters with UFOs. During these sightings, the officers' automobile engines stalled, undergoing electromagnetic effects. Additionally, cattle mutilations were reported between 1974 and 1977 in Prineville, Madras, and Burns, Oregon. According to Hawkins, the brand inspector for the Jefferson County sheriff's department inspected several mutilated cattle found in isolated, inaccessible rural areas that could be entered only by horseback or on foot. The inspector believed that UFOs were involved.

Jack Hawkins and his brother also

witnessed a bright nocturnal light near Madras off Highway 26 during a year that Jack cannot remember. Reported initially by a deputy as a bright light hovering and maneuvering in a canyon, the Hawkins brothers raced to the scene and observed a light above the rimrock of the canyon, which they pursued off the highway. When they arrived where the light was last seen, the hair stood up on their necks and they were assailed by a "terrible smell" as if of something dead. Unsettled, they left the scene, giving up their pursuit of the light. The next day they checked the area for rotting carcasses but discovered none.

### Comment

We often read that the sighting of a UFO is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Yet the stories described above (although dated) indicate otherwise. At least with some law enforcement personnel, the sighting of several UFOs over a span of a few years during flap periods, or over one or two decades during an officer's career, can be a commonplace experience. Yet Jack Hawkins, like so many UFO witnesses, stated that I was the first person (outside his immediate family) that he ever confided in regard-

ing his UFO sightings. I emphasize that I never met Hawkins before. His September 1961 sighting was referred to me through a MUFON investigator who, although he knew Hawkins for several years, had never told him (Hawkins) of his interest in the UFO subject. Conversely, Hawkins never spoke to the MUFON investigator about his sightings.

How many law enforcement personnel hold secretly within themselves countless UFO experiences that they dare not relate to outside observers for fear of ridicule and the threat to their jobs? How much valuable scientific data has been lost during isolated UFO sightings or flap periods when several law enforcement personnel have witnessed UFOs, communicated the sightings to each other or to their superiors, and then have fallen silent through fear or pressure, thus preventing accurate documentation of the sighting and immediate followup? Could a central key to an explanation of the UFO phenomenon lie with officers who patrol potential UFO "hot spots" a night and who, because of their nearubiquitous presence in primary UFO flap locales, could serve as the most "ideal" witnesses to ongoing UFO activity?

## Airships, Continued

of technical and logistical accounts of craft reported in newspapers. However, from my extensive use of newspapers in the field of seismic histories and the history of astronomy I choose to believe the vast majority of what I read. It is much more reasonable to believe that nearly all the newspapers in the country are reporting what the populous believes rather than stories conceived in the minds of newspaper employees.

An example of an airship which far exceeds what Berliner is ready to accept is found in the *New York Times* of December 2, 1897 with technical and logistical detail. The Atlantic and Pacific Navigation Company of San Francisco was organized to manufacture an airship basically like the one Hiram S. Maxim flew round-trip between San Francisco and Cleveland in three days during the summer of 1897. Maxim indicated he could achieve 100 m.p.h. with his 105 h.p. naptha engine without straining it. The airship consisted of a 90 ft long and 38 ft diameter cylinder with a 50 ft cone up front and a 40 ft cone in the rear. The ship weighed 5,000 lbs and could carry a 1-ton cargo. It was controlled up and down with a "tail like that of a bird" and from left to right by a rudder. A "big order of aluminum" had been placed with the Pittsburgh Reduction Company for the double-layered skin which would enclose hydrogen gas. The president, C. A. Smith, and secretary, M. A. Terry, of the company noted that many people observed the ship in its cross-continent voyage. Smith is also the officer of the company who in November of 1896 indicated an airship would soon be sent from San Francisco to the east coast (April 12, 1897 *New York Herald*).

The problem of navigation at night or even day doesn't seem as critical as Berliner suggests. The objective of these pioneers presumably would be just to stay aloft and cover as much ground as they could, rather than navigate from point to point. If they did navigate it could be done with compass and recognition of natural and man-made features. Errors in-

## CRITIC'S CORNER

By Robert Wanderer

There are general theories. And there are specific theories. Each needs to be judged by its own standards.

A general theory takes in a large area of subject matter, like the theory that seeks to explain the broad experience of UFO close encounters and "missing time" by suggesting that these people are "abducted" onto a UFO and later returned.

A specific theory zeroes in on a particular aspect of a larger situation. Like Alvin Lawson's hypothesis that "missing time" people who are hypnotized and tell "abduction" stories may be reflecting primarily the memory of birth trauma rather than anything in the "objective reality."

Both kinds of theories are useful. General theories give us an overview that covers the entire sweep of a problem. Specific theories hone in on one point, and provide something that can be tested.

The "abduction" theory is based, almost entirely, on what people say they think they experienced—and what they say may be distorted by

hypnosis or by some unusual state of consciousness following the strangeness and shock of a UFO close encounter. As far as I know, there is no generally accepted physical evidence of any "abduction"—no one has brought back an artifact from the UFO they believe they were on, nor has there been a case where a "neutral" witness, not involved in the close encounter incident, happened to come on the scene while the subject was being taken onto the UFO, and who could testify about this later. The "abduction" theory depends on the numbers of verbal reports; there are no experiments to test this theory.

Lawson's specific theory, however, gives us something testable. He has conducted studies, including one of a group of people born by cesarean section who told "abduction" stories which lacked the tube/tunnel imagery which is characteristic of hypnotized subjects born in the conventional manner. He invites others to conduct

(Continued on page 18)

roduced at night could be corrected during the day with greatly improved visibility or even a landing if necessary. Because the duration of daylight in the summer is more than twice the duration of night, Maxim may have chosen summer for his voyage partly for this reason.

Examples of airships flights of appreciable length associated with the 1896-7 sightings briefly involve the following:

1. The pilot-inventor Wilson from New York who landed at Lake Charles, Beaumont, Uvalde, and Kountze during the period of April 19-23 (April 21, 25 *Houston Post*; April 24, 28 *Galveston Daily News*; April 26 *San Antonio Daily Express*; May 16 *Dallas Morning News*).

2. Airship Pegasus which dropped letters in the states of Kentucky, Ohio, and Wisconsin describing its construction and travel plans (April 14 *New York Herald*, April 15 *Milwaukee Sentinel*; April 25 *Cincin-*

nati *Commercial Tribune*).

3. Barnard's trips in Tennessee on May 6 of 15 miles in 1½ hours and on May 13 of 12 miles in ¾ hours, being described as achieved or exceeded by at least "fifty other contrivances" (May 7, 15 *New York Tribune*; May 11 *New York Times*).

Unfortunately I have provided little for a definitive solution to the mysterious airships of 1896-7. All I have shown is that there were numerous airships about, and therefore the 1896-7 sightings were probably in part due to nan-made objects. The impact of this is then simply that it is less likely that the 1896-7 sightings are something exceedingly interesting or important such as being extraterrestrial in origin. Perhaps Robert G. Neeley, who is conducting a systematic collection and analysis of airship accounts, state by state, will be able to provide a better explanation of the sightings. □

1.896-97

# In Others' Words

By Lucius Farish

## MUTILATIONS

The **NATIONAL ENQUIRER** for October 29 carries a report by Henry Gris, stating that a fleet of seven UFOs were observed over the city of Kiev, USSR on May 26, 1985. A Soviet jet fighter, dispatched on an intercept mission, suffered engine failure upon nearing the UFOs. The pilot ejected as the plane spiraled downward and crashed.

The October issue of **OMNI** reviews Betty Hill's story of her 1961 UFO abduction and subsequent UFO experiences in the Anit-Matter/UFO Update section of the magazine. **JOURNAL** editor Dennis Stacy contributes an article on the financial perils of UFO research in **OMNI's** November issue.

A fascinating-if-true story of a cattle-killing UFO can be found in the November issue of **FATE**. The report

alleges that a large disc-shaped UFO was seen at close range on a Missouri farm in August, 1896. When the UFO departed, three steers their bodies completely drained of blood, were found in a patch of burned grass. Several other such incidents are claimed to have occurred in the state at the same time although preliminary newspaper research has failed to substantiate this claim. The same issue of **FATE** also contains Part 2 of Hilary Evans' article on "balls of light."

Bob Girard of Arcturus Book Service has recently published a small booklet detailing his own thoughts on UFOs and the human race's place in the cosmic scheme of things (perhaps with an emphasis on "scheme"). Is "the entire human life cycle...subordinated to the needs of an unperceived macrospecies"? Is there some sort of

conspiracy to "keep us human," as Girard speculates? This is all quite interesting food for thought, even if nothing can be proven, pro or con. In the final chapter of his booklet, Girard makes some very telling points, reminding us of the insanities we take for granted in our "normal" lives. As he says, the "true human" strives to leave the herd and to experience life from a "cosmic perspective."

Agreement with all of Girard's premises is not necessary in order to enjoy reading **THE COSMIC SHEEPDOG**. It will give you something (else) to think about, at the least. Copies are available for \$5.95 (plus 85¢ postage & handling) from Arcturus Book Service - P.O. Box 2213, Scotia, NY 12302.

## LETTERS

### OPEN LETTER

Dear Jenny Randles:

I just finished reading your last exchange with Ian Ridpath in the September, 1985, issue of the MUFON UFO Journal, and I feel compelled to ask you to refrain from pursuing this matter any further.

There is no purpose in attempting to have a rational and logical discussion of issues with Mr. Ridpath, as his interest does not lie in finding the truth, but in creating as much controversy and confusion as possible. Like other pseudo-debunkers, he uses whatever information he can think of, banking on the ignorance of the public, which cannot distinguish between milliroentgens per hour and

milliroentgens, and finds nothing suspicious if Venus is in the sky after midnight. He operates by innuendo, changing even the dates of events ("clearly in error") to suit his purposes, ignoring the data that demonstrates the lack of substance of his ideas.

It is a waste of time to reply to his letters and to the specious arguments put forward in his papers, as this will only provide him with new material to harp on. Like all the other members of the CSICOP club, he will never answer a point directly but will labor around it to fire the argument; and under no circumstances will he admit to having been wrong, even if he has to fib a little — to put it nicely.

So, Jenny, I strongly suggest that you ignore his barbs and use your

valuable time for your UFO research. Mr. Ridpath and his fellow club members will get what is due them without any help, as has already happened in the cases of the "Mars connection" and the "flying fishing boat" of New Zealand fame. It is bound to happen to Mr. Ridpath also, unless he sees the light — which I doubt — and realizes that one does not investigate a UFO report by visiting the place years later to play tricks with a TV camera, by not talking to the witnesses and by ignoring all significant information.

Sincerely,  
**Dr. Willy Smith**  
CUFOS, UNICAT  
Project

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# AIR SHIP TAKES COW

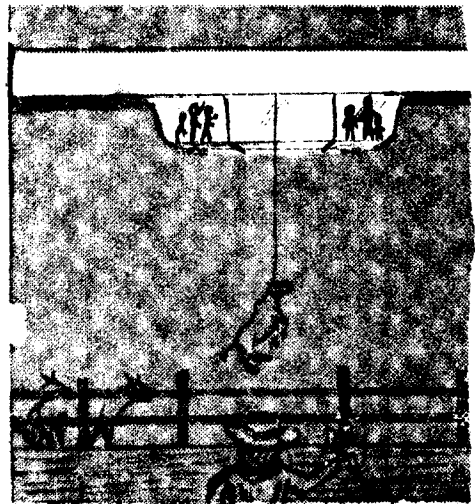
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The Thrilling Experience of a Woodson Stockman

**H**on. Alex Hamilton of Vernon, Kansas, came to town last Wednesday (April 21, 1897) and created quite an excitement by announcing that he had been having some experience with the much talked about airship. Mr. Hamilton is an old settler, was a member of the legislature in the early days and is known all over Woodson, Allen, Coffey and Anderson counties. He stakes his sacred honor upon the truthfulness of the story. Mr. Hamilton said:

"Last Monday night about half past ten o'clock we were awakened by a noise among the cattle. I arose, thinking perhaps my bull dog was performing some of his pranks but upon going to the door, saw to my utter amazement an airship slowly descending over my low lot and about 40 rods from the house. Calling Gid

Heslip, my tenant, and my son Wall, we seized some axes and ran to the corral. Meanwhile the ship had been gently descending until it was not more than 30 feet above the ground



came up to within 50 yards of  
consisted of a great cigar-shaped  
portion possibly 300 feet long with a  
carriage underneath. The carriage was  
made of panels of glass or other  
transparent substance, alternating  
with a narrow strip of some other  
material. It was brilliantly lighted  
within and everything was clearly  
visible. There were three lights; one  
like an immense search light and two  
smaller, one red the other green. The  
large one was susceptible of being  
turned in any direction. It was  
occupied by six of the strangest beings  
I ever saw. There were two men, a  
woman, and three children. They were  
jabbering together but we could not  
understand a syllable they said. Every  
part of the vessel which was not  
transparent was of a dark reddish  
color. We stood mute in wonder and  
fright, when some noise attracted  
their attention and they turned their  
light directly upon us. Immediately  
upon catching sight of us, they turned  
on some unknown power, and a great  
turbine wheel about 30 feet in  
diameter which was slowly revolving  
below the craft, began to buzz,  
sounding precisely like the cylinder of  
a separator, and the vessel rose as  
lightly as a bird. When about 300 ft.  
above us it seemed to pause and hover  
directly over a three year old heifer  
which was bawling and jumping,  
apparently fast in the fence. Going to  
her we found a cable about half an

inch in thickness, made of the same  
red material, fastened in a slip knot  
about her neck, one end passing up to  
the vessel and tangled in the wire. We  
tried to get it off but could not, so we  
cut the wire loose and stood in  
amazement to see ship, cow and all  
rise slowly and sail off, disappearing in  
the northwest. We went home but I  
was so frightened I could not sleep  
but arose early Tuesday morning,  
mounted my horse and started out  
hoping to find some trace of my cow.  
This I failed to do but coming back to  
Leroy in the evening found that Lank  
Thomas who lives in Coffey county  
about three or four miles west of  
Leroy had found the hide, legs and  
head in his field that day. He, thinking  
some one had butchered a stolen beast  
and thrown the hide away, had  
brought it to town for identification  
but was greatly mystified in not being  
able to find a track of any kind on the  
soft ground. I went home last night  
but every time I would drop to sleep I  
would see the cursed thing with its big  
lights and hideous people. I don't  
know whether they are devils or  
angels or what but we all saw them  
and my whole family saw the ship and  
I don't want any more to do with  
them."

Mr. Hamilton looked as if he had  
not entirely recovered from the shock  
and every one who heard him was  
convinced he was sincere in every  
word.

# ARE PSYCHIC PEOPLE MORE LIKELY TO SEE UFOs?

A case history, in the witness's own words with commentary

Janet Bord

1.896-97 ←



Our grateful thanks to Lucius Farish for introducing us to the story and claims of Charlie Jones. At our suggestion Mrs. Bord corresponded with Mr. Jones and obtained much additional information. Recently married, our contributor was well-known to readers as Miss Janet Gregory.

NOW that more and more UFO researchers are beginning to consider the possibility of a link between UFOs and a whole range of occult phenomena, it is interesting that deeper investigation of UFO witnesses quite often reveals that a witness has had more than one UFO sighting, and has also experienced what are generally termed psychic phenomena. It would appear that a certain "sensitivity" is in operation, and those who have it are likely to see all manner of strange things invisible to most human eyes.

One man who comes into this category is Charles Jones. He lives in a pleasant, rural area of Indiana, U.S.A., and has seen UFOs fairly frequently during the last twenty-four years. "My first observation of UFOs was early in 1947, which was a huge, dark orange-coloured sphere which flew around Indianapolis, Indiana, three times before it began to turn red and quickly sped off to the south-east. From then up into 1952 I watched several bluish-white UFO light streaks in the western sky flying south. I did not pay much attention then until sometime in 1964 . . . During 1966 and 1967, several UFOs flew by our house over our neighbour's field (to the east) to around 1,000 feet. At

the north end of our woods, they would turn west. The turns which I observed were of a high degree radius turn, never sudden 90 degree angle turns. Once in a while one would have trouble and zigzag some before proceeding on west."

During the 1960s, Charlie took some photographs of the lights he saw at night. The area was especially rich in sightings during that decade, with a flap lasting from the end of 1965 until 1969. Several different types of UFO were seen, including the frequently observed disc-shaped craft, one of which flew over Charlie's house just above tree-top height, on November 13, 1965.

## UFO and humanoid sighting near Sheridan

It was only a month later that Charlie had his most spectacular sighting. He saw a UFO at close quarters, and a "man" sitting inside it. It was Saturday, December 11, 1965, shortly after 1.00 p.m. Charlie was driving home from Sheridan where he had been Christmas shopping, and was travelling south along the Lamong Road. The weather was overcast with a white cloud cover at the time, and it had rained before noon. "What caught my attention," he said, "was a small white light

(Continued from page 19)

pointed toward the earth. A similar object was observed twice over Cruz Alta, Brazil, in December of the same year. When it reappeared in July 1937, its "head" had become a ball of fire.

Then there was the great scare of 1857-58, when in the late dusk one evening a giant serpent hovered above a steamboat slowing for a landing along the Missouri River in Nebraska. It seemed to be breathing fire, say accounts, and it had "lighted streaks" along its sides. Sightings must have continued, for some years later a song passed into local folk tradition:

'Twas a dark night in Sixty-six

When we was layin' steel.

We seen a flyin' engine come  
Without no wing or wheel

It came a-roarin' in the sky  
With lights along the side . . .

And scales like a serpent's hide.

By the turn of the century Nebraskans were no longer confusing serpents and UFOs. In February 1897 "airships" started flying over the state and in the years ahead stories of a giant creature in Alkali Lake near Hay Springs, first told by Indians to the first white settlers in the area, were revived. One alleged observer said

that "its head was like an oil barrel, shiny black in the moonlight. Its flashing green eyes were spitting fire."

With incidents like those recounted above, we are moving into new and uncharted territory, where the line between "machines" and "animals" becomes blurred; so does the line that divides the various types of Fortean phenomena. The moral may be that research which concentrates on UFOs alone, ignoring the other mysteries of the physical world, is pointless. Perhaps what we need in the meantime is a report of a UFO dumping large, moving objects into the waters of Loch Ness!

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on Animals and Birds" crops up in the discussion. The "E.M. Effect" does not in fact worry them too badly, because their stock explanation is that the engine was not stopped by a UFO, but was stalled by a neurotic or psychotic driver who *imagined* that he was seeing a UFO. They have a point, which we can willingly grant them in a few cases at any rate. But they remain far less happy about the birds and animals, for here no such easy escape solution is at hand. The only safe position for our opponents is consequently to maintain resolutely that no such weird and abnormal behaviour by animal or bird can ever be proved to have occurred except where there is a good cast-iron explanation. Thus squawking chickens are always squawking because there is an eagle or a sparrowhawk overhead. Panicking sheep have been set in motion by that ubiquitous agency the common dog. Cattle are rushing about because maddened by bot-flies. And so on.

THE CATALOGUE—(i) B.C. TO 1946 A.D.

1. **Middle East** (*Reign of Alexander the Great*, 356-323 B.C.) A historian of the reign of Alexander the Great allegedly tells of two strange craft that dived repeatedly at his army, until the war elephants, the men, and all the horses panicked and refused to cross the river where the incident occurred . . . The historian describes the objects as "great shining silvery shields, spitting fire around the rims . . . things that came from the skies and returned to the skies."

Frank Edwards: *Stranger Than Science* (Pan Books, London), p. 198.

2. **Rutland, England** (September 15, 1749) Fiery object like a waterspout, whirling and roaring, frightened cattle and rustics.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 207.

3. **Robertson County, Tennessee, U.S.A.** (between 1817 and 1821)

The farm of John Bell seemed to be haunted, with typical poltergeist phenomena occurring and "flying lights" being seen.

One of the many visitors who came to see the haunted house was General Andrew Jackson. When he was approaching in a horse-drawn wagon, the wheels of the wagon suddenly seemed to "freeze", and the straining horses were unable to move it until a "sharp metallic voice" from behind some bushes cried: "All right, General. Let the wagon move!", whereupon the wheels began to turn again.

FSR, November/December 1968, p. 16.

(See notes.) John Keel: *Is the "E.M." Effect a Myth?*

4. **Horton, Wiltshire, England** (June 1857) The *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* of July 2, 1857, reported farmer Wm. Brown rode towards a "whirl-puff". There was no rush of wind, and the conditions did not resemble a real whirlwind. Horse was terrified, staggered, and Mr. Brown almost lifted out of the saddle.

FSR, November/December 1966, p. 18.

5. **Swaffham, Norfolk, England** (January 15, 1869) Something seen in sky, and "mysterious explosions not of meteoric origin", stampeded hundreds of sheep.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

6a. **Bonham, Texas, U.S.A.** (1873) At Bonham, Texas, in 1873, workers in a cotton-field were terrorised by a shiny, silver object that came streaking down from the sky at them. It swung around, like a great silver serpent, said one witness, and dived at them again and again. A team of horses ran away, and the driver was thrown under the wheels of the wagon and killed.

6b. **Fort Riley, Kansas, U.S.A.** (1873) And on the same day, an hour or so after the incident at Bonham, the same or a similar thing swooped down from the skies at some Army troops on the cavalry parade ground at Fort Riley, Kansas, and terrorised the horses to such an extent that cavalry drill ended in tumult.

Both from Frank Edwards: *Stranger Than Science*, p. 198.

7. **Berkshire, England** (8.20 a.m., November 20, 1887) An unknown something in the sky, and mysterious explosions, stampede sheep over an area of 210 sq. miles.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

8. **Thames Valley, England** (night of November 13, 1888) Sheep stampeded over area of 22 square miles. Found panting in terror and crowded under hedges, on widely scattered farms next morning.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

9. **Chiltern Hills, England** (October 25, 1889) Over a region of about 40 square miles, sheep in hundreds burst simultaneously out of folds and barns. The panic was contagious, though the farms and folds were not adjoining, but miles apart.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

10. **Leroy, Kansas, U.S.A.** (April 19, 1897) The Hamilton household were aroused by a commotion among their cattle and household dogs. Going out, they found overhead the "Texan airship", which had lassoed one of their heifers.

Jacques Vallée: *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*, p. 16.

11. **Rockland, Texas, U.S.A.** (11.30 p.m., April 22, 1897) At Rockland, Mr. John M. Barclay, having retired for the night, heard his dog barking furiously, and also a whining noise. He went out to look, and saw a great machine stationary (the "Texas Airship") a few feet from the ground. A man from the machine, asked him for lubricating oil, cold chisels, and bluestone. Asked where they were from and whither going, the man replied: "From anywhere, but we will be in Greece the day after tomorrow."

D. B. Hanlon and J. Vallée: *Airships Over Texas*, FSR, January/February 1967, p. 23.

12. **Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.** (April 1897) The *Dallas News* of April 28, 1897, had a report of an anonymous witness (a lawyer) who was driving his horse and buggy at night when the "Airship" passed overhead. The horse snorted, reared, plunged madly, nearly overturned the buggy, and stood trembling like a leaf.

Donald B. Hanlon: *Texas Odyssey of 1897*, FSR, September/October 1966, p. 8.

13. **Hot Springs, Arkansas, U.S.A.** (night of May 6, 1897) Two law officers, Sumpter and McLemore, tried to approach the landed UFO on their horses, but the animals refused to go nearer than 100 yards or so.

Jerome Clark: *The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship*, FSR, July/August 1966, p. 15.

14. **Seal Rocks, Sutro Heights, San Francisco, U.S.A.** (November 22, 1897) The "airship" flew over the Cliff House and projected its powerful beam on Seal Rocks, causing the seals to dive frantically into the water.

Lore and Deneault: *Mysteries of the Skies*, p. 7.

15. **Thames Estuary Marshes, England** (1901) Another stampede of sheep. All fled westwards, away from the North Sea.

H. T. Wilkins: *Flying Saucers On The Moon*, p. 311.

FSR, J-F 1970





Encounters with  
the MATAH KAGMI

YETIS

(H)

39

My Grandfather was born in upper California Country near the mountain of Shasta. This was in the year of 1853. He fought in the Modoc Indian War (1872-73) in defense of his homeland, however, it was the same old story-- defeat, and being sent to a reservation.

Grandfather did not like the white man's reservation however, and soon returned to the part of the country that he loved. It was by some very good luck and the help of a white friend in Yreka, California, he was able to buy some land near Tululake up in the mountains. He then built a cabin there, and lived there from then on until his death. He died in 1935. He fell asleep on a river bank and never awakened again.

Grandfather lived a long and eventful life, but not always a happy one.

He told me this story as a child, and I never tired of hearing it.

His first contact with the Sasquatch was one evening in the summer of 1897. He was walking along a deer trail near a lake just about dusk, when he saw up ahead something that looked like a tall bush. Upon coming a little closer he became aware of a strong odor, sort of musky. He then gave a close look at the bush, and suddenly realized that it was not a bush at all, for it was covered from head to foot with thick coarse hair, much like horsehair. He took a step closer, but the creature made a sound that sounded like "Nyyaaaah!" Grandfather now knew that this was one of the ones that he had heard the old ones tell about, a Sasquatch!

Although it was growing darker, Grandfather was able to see quite clearly two soft brown eyes through the hairy head part, then the creature moved slightly, and Grandfather made a motion of friendship and laid down the string of fish that he had been carrying. The creature evidently understood this, as it quickly snatched up the fish and struck out through the timber nearby. It stopped only for a moment and made a sound that Grandfather never forgot--a long, low "Aaagoooooooooummmm!"

Grandfather never told anyone outside the family this story, and he called them people. He referred to them as people called MATAH KAGMI. Now here is something that is most interesting, and doubtful that it could be by chance, and that is that the people in Tibet call the so-

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... much alike.

# BELLY ACHES

(The following items were located by researcher Angelo Capparella III.)

Charlotte, N.C. Daily Observer, July 24, 1897.

(Philadelphia Record) "Authentic stories of the ejection of live lizards from the human stomach aren't of infrequent occurrence, but by his performance in that line on Friday last Morris Collins, of Angora, has certainly become a record-breaker. After an ill-duration Collins suddenly became on Friday and vomited no less in size from 3½ inches to ½ lizards Collins rapidly in now able to be about. That can be little doubt, as the several persons who were in the time, and as additional reptiles, which he has pre-bottle. Besides the 36 whole heads and tails of several however, are quite small.... when informed of the number the specimens in the bottle, the most remarkable that had ation. How the reptiles got mystery to Collins, who can presence upon the theory that of their spawn when quenching health has been on the mend covering lost weight rapidly.

Statesville, N.C.

(Testimony of James O. Lack-  
" I for several years have in my stomach, and the longer treated by some as good phy-versed with a dozen or more, agree....It seemed that there at length one day I took about three-quarters of a box of Dr. Bachmann's Vermifuge confections. The next day I took a full box, then I was afterwards taking Dr. Dunlap's Liver Regulator and Blood Cleanser for some days after. I passed something of the spring lizard tribe, it being somewhat decayed, so its size around I could not get, but its length was exactly ten and three-quarters inches. Its color was near perfect white, and I am happy to say to you today that since then I have not had any more spells and have not even felt the symptoms but am not stout by any means and never will be again."

March 1972

## *Hanoi: Monster Removed From Man*

Reuter

HONG KONG, March 17—North Vietnamese doctors have killed a ten-inch long "monster" with head, tongue, teeth and legs growing inside a 22-year-old man, the North Vietnamese news agency reported today.

"The monster was located between the liver, the right kidney and the right lung," the news agency said.

"It weighed 1.5 kilograms (3 pounds, 5 ounces) and measured 25 centimeters (10 inches) in length. It had a monstrous tongue capping the head which had a cyclopic eye and vestiges of the jaw with well-formed teeth," the agency said.

The agency did not identify the patient, nor did it say whether he was feeling any better.

ness of several weeks came sick at the stomach than 36 lizards, varying inch. After vomiting the proved in health, and is the case is genuine there lizards are vouched for by the house with Collins at proof the man exhibits the served in alcohol in a reptiles, there are the others, all of which, The attending physician, of lizards, and when shown pronounced the case to be ever come under his observ- into his stomach is a only account for their he must have swallowed some his thirst at a spring. His since Friday and he is re-

Landmark, May 27, 1886.

ney; Alexander County, N.C.) been suffering with a pain the worse. I have been sicians as we have and con- and it seemed as if none would was no relief for me...when

A. SUMMER - 72

"One of our aldermen from the fifth ward said to him it bore a resemblance to a big frog, all aglow with iridescent fire. A popular musician saw it but to him it bore the appearance of a translucent bee hive, lighted with electric lights. Now what on earth did these good people see?"

A couple of days after the object's initial appearance, "The Elgin Evening Dial" came out with perhaps the most objective story about the mystery and offered what appears to be a plausible explanation:

"Men who claim to have seen the 'air ship' with its colored lights that has appeared simultaneously over Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska were again numerous in Elgin last evening and who would laugh at the idea had an argument on his hands immediately.

"The light that was seen by men who believe it is an 'air ship' is described as having an indulating motion. It moved off toward the northeast vanishing by degrees. Red, white and green colored lights were displayed.

"Astronomers laugh at the idea and Professor George Hough of the Dearborn Obser-

vatory in Evanston has an outline of the course of the star Alpha Orionis. He said.

"This is the air ship. It has been roaming through its regular course in the firmament these 10,000,000 years and why it should have been settled upon these last three weeks and pointed out as the headlight of a mysterious aerial vessel is a thing hard to explain.

Alpha Orionis appears on the meridian at five o'clock and becomes visible at eight o'clock. At that time it resembles a strong white electric light. It first becomes noticeable in the central southwest portion of the sky. At an unusual rapid rate for a star it takes its course toward the northwest, finally disappearing in that corner. As the star begins to sink, the atmospheric conditions cause it to appear to be of a reddish hue on the under side and green on the upper portion when seen through a glass. The center of the body is white."

End of the mystery? Well, not quite. According to Don Tuttle, director of the Elgin Planetarium, Alpha Orionis

would not be a suitable explanation for those objects spotted in the eastern sky. He suggested that the Yerkes Observatory in Wisconsin could help find the answer to the riddle, but John Lester at the observatory reported that it would be hard to mistake a planet for an air ship on this particular date.

"There was nothing extraordinary on this date," Lester said after reviewing planet positions for April 16, 1897. He added that Venus, often mistaken for an unusual celestial object, was pretty well out of site. He did mention reports of an extremely bright meteor shower in the earlier part of the year.

Tuttle also said it could have been a special case of a large meteor coming very close to the earth "but there's no way of checking."

John W. Gunderson of 525 South Commonwealth Ave., Elgin, 17 years old at the time, cannot recall the specific commotion about the mysterious object. He was living on a farm just five miles south of Elgin in 1897.

But Gunderson, extremely alert for a man of 92, does re-

member a heavy amount of meteor activity during the late 1890's and says the objects could very well have been these meteors.

Another long time Elgin resident, Elmer Gylleck, was born in 1898 but speculates about the likely cause of all the strange sightings.

Gylleck says many youths used to launch paper balloons filled with hot air by a small torch.

"The hot air would fill the balloon and lift it high in the sky," Gylleck explained. "They were especially popular around the Fourth of July, but they were very dangerous to play with and the farmers didn't like them."

He said from a distance people could not identify these floating balloons and they were easily mistaken for strange floating objects.

Stars, air ships, hot air balloons or meteors? Nobody will ever know what Elgin residents saw during those April nights of 1897. But it sure gave the people plenty to talk about those days.

Wilkesboro, N.C. Chronicle, October 13, 1897

### STOLE A STONE WALL

Two of the most unique cases of thieving on record are being investigated in Haverhill, Mass. One is the stealing of 15,000 live fish and the other is the theft of a big stone wall surrounding the cemetery of the Hebrew Burial Assoc. This is the first instance ever chronicled of the larceny of a stone wall from a graveyard. Last fall Charles Goodrich constructed an artificial lake on his estate, and stocked it with "shiners" which he intended to sell this winter. Yesterday he had a sale and went in search of the fish but found that they had all gone. The lake was still there, and as there is no outlet there was only one explanation of the mystery.

The Hebrew Burial Association purchased twenty acres of land near the Whittier homestead two years ago. It inclosed the lot with a stone wall. The wall has taken wings just as mysteriously as did the fish in the artificial lake. The members of the board, however, deny that they touched the stones at all, and say that they got their stone from a lot of land which they purchased. The stolen wall was about a half mile long. It is estimated there were nearly 1000 cords of stone in the wall.-- New York Press.

# LETTERS

1.895

U.S.O.s

Dear Editor,

My attention has recently been drawn to the UFO report made by Betty Cash and Vickie Landrum (after an alleged incident near Huffman, Texas, on 1980 Dec. 29). My source of information is John Schuessler's article "Blind terror in Texas" in *The Unexplained* 9(107) 2121-25, (1982).

Looking for an astronomical explanation I noticed that the given time (9 p.m.) could not be correct; the witnesses reported seeing the Moon, but the Moon did not rise until just after 1 a.m. Nor is it likely that, after dining out, they were returning home as early as 9 p.m. A more likely time is near midnight.

Just after midnight Canopus, the second brightest star in the whole sky (magnitude -0.71), lay at only 7° altitude directly south (180°). Highway FM 1485 runs in a dead straight line almost due south for 4 miles on a slight downward gradient (1 in 621 on average). With forest on either side of the road, this would have given the travelers a head-on view of Canopus if they were on that road at the time Canopus was lined up with it.

At that low altitude, the light from Canopus would have been both refracted (into spectral colors) and distorted (with streamers to the ground). The description given is consistent with other accounts of stars seen at low altitude. The conclusion must be that Cash and Landrum, not knowing that they were looking at a star, concluded that it was a UFO, ideas about which influenced their perception. Their conclusions that the car became hot and that they suffered burns must be the result of hysteria.

One would have liked to know how much alcohol they had consumed and what UFO lore they had already absorbed. One would also have liked to know whether or not the road surface (where they imagined the UFO to be) was affected by heat. I predict that no

such damage will have been found.

Although it is alleged that the object later moved "away over the tree tops" it must be concluded that this later object was not Canopus, which would have disappeared behind the forest. It is not clear from Schuessler's article exactly where subsequent objects were seen, but Jupiter (at magnitude -1.8) later rose in the west (accompanied by Saturn in close conjunction). The witnesses may have thought that Jupiter was the same UFO.

Yours faithfully  
**Steuart Campbell**  
Scotland

## TO ALL OF THE MUFON GROUP,

Just a note to thank all of you for your very hard and time-consuming work that you have done for Vickie, Colby (Landrum) and myself. Without each of you, I really don't know what we would have done.

Please accept my apologies for such people that you have to listen to such as Steuart Campbell. People like that are to be pitied. He said he even doubted our credibility — well I doubt his mentality. All I can say is that it is such a shame it was us. It should have been him and then we would see if he would have said it was a star. Just one day of what we have suffered would have been too much for him — not even speaking of the years.

May God bless each and everyone of you for your great work.

**Betty Cash**  
Alabama

Dear Editor,

Thought you might be interested in this passage I came across in Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (London, Virago Press, 1982, from a turn-of-the-century original edition), p. 254. Ms. Kingsley was on an 1895 exploration at Lake Ncovi between the Ogowe and Rembwe rivers, then in the

region of the Niger Protectorate and Gabon, when she went out at night alone to bathe and canoe on the lake waters. Then:

"...I saw a strange thing happen. Down through the forest on the lake bank opposite came a violet ball the size of a small orange. When it reached the sand beach it hovered along it to and fro close to the ground. In a few minutes another ball of similarly colored light came towards it from behind one of the islets, and the two waver to and fro over the beach, sometimes circling round each other. I made off toward them in the canoe, thinking — as I still do — they were some brand new kind of luminous insect. When I got onto their beach one of them went off into the bushes and the other away over the water. I followed in the canoe, for the water here is very deep and, when I almost thought I had got it, it went down into the water and I could see it glowing as it sunk until it vanished in the depths."

Later, on asking the natives in this very remote region, they explain it as an "Aku" — a devil. There is no further explanation or discussion of the incident.

I'd tend to dismiss it as an insect too, except for its underwater dive. Ms. Kingsley is an eminently practical, matter-of-fact, not in the least fanciful observer and a highly intelligent and perceptive travel writer. This incident recalls other "tiny UFO" oddities of the sort reported by Fort and others.

One more point: the use of the word "aku" in West Africa — there's the same correspondence noted in other vocabulary to similar terminology in Polynesia (and elsewhere??). One might speculate about possible widespread dissemination of the same or similar names for spirits in prehistory. But that's really getting into deep waters!

-Robert Coltman  
S. Chelmsford, MA

M, JN-PC

of a heavy artillery salute, and was heard for twenty miles. The cylindrical shaped ball of fire was forging along in a south-westerly direction when first discovered. The hissing sound of the fire could be heard for miles, and the smoke gave the meteor the appearance of a burning balloon.

When the meteor exploded the pieces flew in all directions, like a volcanic upheaval, and solid walls were pierced by the fragments. David Letsure was knocked down by the force of the air caused by the rapidity with which the body passed before it broke. The blow rendered him unconscious. One horse had its head crushed and nearly torn from the trunk by a fragment of the meteor, and another horse in the next stall was discovered stone deaf.

The coming of the meteor was heralded by a rumbling noise, followed in an instant by the hissing sound, and immediately the ball of fire, spitting and smoking, burst into full view, and before the people had time to collect their senses, the explosion occurred.

New York Times, March 11, 1897.

1. MAY-74

Remarkable Atmospheric Manifestation in the South of Russia.

The superstitious peasants of the Ukraine were lately terribly alarmed by an unusual atmospheric phenomena which appeared two hours before sunrise in a village called Loomlino, situated near the river Don. Many of those who were awake at the early hour stated that the "apparition" was of a brilliant red color, and assumed the shape of a crescent. It only lasted a few minutes and gradually faded away into a light blue color. Many of those who witnessed this remarkable appearance in the heavens state that it was accompanied by a loud rumbling similar to thunder. Others, who have more imagination, aver that the red crescent resembled a large dragon in its shape, and that it is a sure portent of a coming war or a great plague.

"Miscellany," Eclectic Magazine, March 1890, pp. 431-32.

1. MAY-74

Atmospheric Phenomenon.

Oshkosh, Wisc. March 19th. A most remarkable atmospheric phenomenon occurred here at 3 P.M. The day was light, though cloudy, when suddenly darkness commenced settling down, and in five minutes it was as dark as midnight. General consternation prevailed, people on the streets rushed to and fro, teams dashed along, and women and

children ran into cellars, all business operations ceased until lights could be lighted. No breath of air was stirring on the surface of the earth. The darkness lasted from 8 to 10 minutes, when it passed off, seemingly from west to east, and brightness followed. News from cities to the west say the same phenomenon was observed there in advance of its appearance here, showing that the wave of darkness passed from west to east. Nothing could be seen to indicate any air currents overhead. It seemed to be a wave of total darkness passing along without wind.

PAGE 34

from: Daily Republican, La Crosse, Wisc., March 20, 1886.

On Monday, September 24, about 9 P.M., a remarkable phenomenon occurred at Karingon, in the province of Bohus, Sweden. During a perfect calm a violent whirlwind suddenly arose from the south-east, carrying with it a quantity of sand, earth, and straw, when suddenly a bright light lit up every object and made the night as clear as day. This was caused by a magnificent meteor, egg-shaped in form, which appeared in the zenith and which at first seemed to consist of myriads of large specks, gradually changing into a star shining with a blinding lustre, and which burst, with all the colors of the rainbow, in the north-west, four to five metres above the horizon. When the meteor had disappeared the wind suddenly fell, and it was again perfectly calm. The phenomenon lasted about sixty seconds. The wind had throughout the day been south and very slight.

from: Nature, Nov. 1, 1893, vol. 29, p. 15.

A Remarkable Meteor.

A remarkable meteor was seen in Western Australia on Feb. 1 this year. The following account has been forwarded to me by Mr. S. Worsley Clifton, Collector of Customs at Freemantle:

"A small black cloud on a clear day appeared in the east, travelling not very swiftly towards the north-west, which burst into a ball of fire with an apparent disk the size of the full moon, blood-red in colour; it left a train of black or dark-coloured vapour across the heavens which was visible for three-quarters of an hour. No sound was heard, sky perfectly clear, and thermometer 100° F in the shade."

Observatory, Melbourne, April 16  
Robt. J. Ellery

from: Nature, June 5, 1879, Vol. 20, p. 121.

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of a heavy artillery salute, and was heard for twenty miles. The cylindrical shaped ball of fire was forging along in a south-westerly direction when first discovered. The hissing sound of the fire could be heard for miles, and the smoke gave the meteor the appearance of a burning balloon.

When the meteor exploded the pieces flew in all directions, like a volcanic upheaval and solid walls were pierced by the fragmen David Letsure was knocked down by the force of the air caused by the rapidity with which the body passed before it broke. The blow rendered him unconscious. One horse had its head crushed and nearly torn from the trunk by a fragment of the meteor, and another horse in the next stall was discovered stone deaf.

The coming of the meteor was heralded by a rumbling noise, followed in an instant by the hissing sound, and immediately the ball of fire, spitting and smoking, burst into full view, and before the people had time to collect their ~~senses~~, the explosion occurred.

New York Times, March 11, 1897. 1. MAY-1

for an unscheduled explosion. The view of the intelligence agencies in the United States was that either Pakistan or South Africa had exploded a test weapon, but owing to the location of the explosion South Africa was blamed. News of the South African flash did not reach the public until late October, but the United States was unable to produce any substantial evidence of an atomic explosion when the South African government denied having tested such a device.<sup>42 43</sup>

On October 30th, 1979, the South African Embassy in Ottawa was furnished with information indicating other electrical phenomena, such as that at Lance Cove, had been similarly registered by Vela satellites. Superbolts of lightning had been detected on 17 occasions from January 21st, 1972, up to April 13th, 1975.<sup>44</sup> Two days later, the New York Times also suggested that "superbolts" might have been responsible. The leading proponent of the "superbolt hypothesis" was Dr. Gordon J. MacDonald of the MITRE Corporation. He suggested that an explosion heard over Long Island, New York, on October 10th was the result of a superbolt. The weather conditions near South Africa were "not very different" from those associated with the destructive superbolt at Lance Cove, according to Dr. MacDonald; but he offered no particulars as to what conditions were conducive to the generation of superbolts.<sup>45</sup>

The Ministry of Transport may not have taken note of the discussion by scientists in the United States concerning superbolts, for on October 31st and November 1st of 1979, Neil Standen was in Filton, England, to discuss the measurement of sonic booms produced by the Concorde. British Airways, Air France, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, Transport Canada, and other agencies were concerned with reducing the sonic booms experienced in New England and Nova Scotia. The British and French representatives were puzzled by the number of "startle complaints" in North America when similar conditions in Cornwall, England, elicited very few complaints.<sup>46</sup> Earlier, Standen had announced in January 1979 that 77% of the booms reported by way of a "toll-free boom line" in Nova Scotia started in October 1978; but in September 1978 Standen had already announced that the source of the mystery booms was the Concorde.<sup>47-48</sup> Even

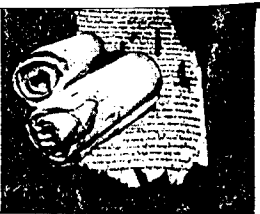
though the study was publicly said to seek the identity of the mystery booms, its true purpose was to keep track of where sonic booms from the Concorde were still disturbing Nova Scotia communities.

The Ministry of Transport received more than telephone calls from Nova Scotia residents and radar tracks of Concorde from NORAD. Only the Halifax office of Emergency Planning Canada retained a letter to the editor in the St. John Telegraph-Journal of 1 June 1978.<sup>50 51</sup> Once before, on 3 December 1973, Truro, Nova Scotia was shaken by a "loud noise" which was first thought to have been a boiler explosion. Telegraphic enquiries failed to locate its source, but revealed that it had been heard in many surrounding communities. The event was considered to be an earthquake although the noise came from above.<sup>52</sup> In the Bay of Fundy area, "remarkable sounds, like gun reports" were recorded by naturalist W.F. Ganong and Samuel W. Kain at the turn of the century. Their mysterious origin was a subject of speculation in Scientific American and the Monthly Weather Review (U.S.).<sup>53-55</sup> Kain's record of earthquakes in New Brunswick contain a number of claims of cannonading sounds preceding earthquakes including those of 14 February 1897 and 28 February 1904.<sup>56 57</sup> Other newspaper reports provided to Standen included more current booms over the skies of Montreal and Mississauga. On August 2nd, 1952, a blast shattered windows in Montreal setting off fears of an earthquake. Although blame was directed towards a sonic boom, one woman reported seeing a "ball of fire" coming down out of the sky.<sup>58 59</sup> On August 8th, 1974, the switchboards of the Peel and the Halton Regional Police were swamped with calls about a loud explosion at 5 a.m., but no cause for the blast could be found. One man claimed to have seen "a white fluorescent, oval-shaped disc" speeding across the sky at the same time.<sup>60 61</sup> Whether the mystery booms were the result of earthquakes, exploding meteors, or UFOs —or if they happened away from the Atlantic near Cornwall— all data involving aerial detonations where Concorde was not flying were kept out of the Ministry of Transport study.

The most puzzling aspect of the Lance Cove phenomena was the electrical disturbance and flash of light, but twice in the next few

1, J-Feb 84 DE → "UFOCATS = SONIC BOOMS"





# UNA CIUDAD RETRATADA EN EL CIELO

Como dijimos en el número anterior, los "espejismos celestes" tal vez fueron los misterios espaciales más impresionantes que documentó para la posteridad el inefable Charles Fort. Luego de recopilar cientos de casos de este tipo en varias partes del mundo, Fort especuló que podría tratarse de visiones (hoy diríamos "avistamientos") de "ciudades" o "islas" (hoy diríamos "colonias espaciales") que se desplazan a través del espacio sideral, y que algunas veces pasan muy cerca de la Tierra, por lo que pueden ser observadas por nosotros.

La explicación de Fort pecaría de ingenua si no estuviera apoyada por la casuística con que siempre acompaña sus especulaciones. Respecto al rigor con que documentaba e investigaba sus casos, basta como ejemplo el pasaje de Nuevos Mundos (New Lands) que hemos seleccionado para este número, y que se refiere al avistamiento y a la fotografía de una "ciudad suspendida en el cielo", en 1908.

"En *English Mechanic* del 10 de septiembre de 1897, es citado un corresponsal de *Weekly Times and Echo*. Apenas acababa de llegar de Yukón En los primeros días de junio de 1897, vio una ciudad retratada en el cielo de Alaska. Nadie de nosotros podía saber ni remotamente en qué parte del mundo podría estar esa ciudad. Algunos creyeron que era Toronto, otros Montreal, y alguien sugirió que se trataba de Pekín. Pero aunque esa ciudad exista o no en algún mundo desconocido al otro lado del Polo Norte, el hecho es que este espejismo maravilloso aparece de tiempo en tiempo cada año, y no somos los únicos que hemos visto este espectáculo. Por ello, evidentemente debe ser un reflejo de un pueblo construido por la mano del hombre'. Según este corresponsal, el espejismo no se parecía a ninguna de las ciudades mencionadas, sino que era 'una inmensa ciudad del pasado'.

"En el *New York Times*, del 17 de febrero de 1901, se afirma que los nativos de Alaska relataban que

ocasionalmente se aparecía una ciudad suspendida en el cielo, y que un explorador, llamado Willoughby, que había oído los relatos, investigó y vio el espectáculo en el año de 1887. Se dice que, después de intentar fotografiarlo varias veces, Willoughby finalmente mostró una toma de una supuesta ciudad aérea. En su obra *Alaska* (pág. 140) Miner Bruce dice que Willoughby, uno de los primeros exploradores de Alaska, y quien le dio su nombre a la Isla Willoughby, le habló de este fenómeno, y en los primeros días de 1899, acompañó a Willoughby al lugar en que afirmaba que se repetía el espejismo. Parece que no lo vio, pero cita a un miembro de la expedición del Duc d'Abruzzi al Monte San Elías, realizada en el verano de 1897; el señor C. W. Thornton, de Seattle, que vio el espectáculo y escribió: 'No se necesitaba hacer un esfuerzo de imaginación para comparar esto con una ciudad, pero era algo tan claro que se requería tener mucha fe para convencerse de que no era una ciudad real'. Bruce publicó una reproducción de la fotografía que tomó Willoughby, y dice que la ciudad se identificó como Bristol, Inglaterra. Esta reproducción es tan clara y tan diferente a un espejismo

(muestra detalladamente árboles y muchos edificios) que se puede creer que el original haya sido la fotografía de una gran ciudad terrestre, quizá Bristol, Inglaterra.

"En el capítulo décimo de su libro, *Maravillas de Alaska*, Alexander Badlam ha tratado de explicar el asunto. Para ello publicó una reproducción de la fotografía tomada por Willoughby, que es la misma de Bruce, excepto porque todos los edificios están invertidos, o en la posición de un negativo. Badlam no quería acusar de fraude a Willoughby: creía que algún bromista desconocido le había venido una placa fotográfica a Willoughby, que en parte representaba a la ciudad de Bristol. Creo que algo así ocurrió, y esta fotografía, muy involucrada en los relatos de los espejismos repetidos, no tiene relación con éstos. Badlam muestra otra fotografía. Cuenta que dos hombres, cerca del Glaciar Muir, en una cacerola con mercurio vieron el reflejo de una ciudad desconocida, y creyeron que se encontraba en el fondo del mar cerca del glaciar, que se reflejaba en el cielo y que el reflejo regresaba y se reproducía de nuevo en el mercurio. Esto es muy complejo. Un fotógrafo llamado Taber

Continúa en la pág. 49



"La primera identificación de la fotografía de Willoughby como representación de una parte de la ciudad de Bristol, aparece en el *New York Times* del 20 de octubre de 1889. Me parece que esta fotografía fue para engañar a alguien.

Pero no era similar al panorama frecuentemente contemplado en el cielo de Alaska, según las descripciones. En el *New York Times* del 31 de octubre de 1889, el señor L. B. French, de Chicago, hace un relato de esta aparición espectral, como él la vio, cerca del Monte Fairweather: 'Pudimos ver claramente las casas, las calles y los árboles. Aquí y allí se levantaban altos capiteles sobre grandes edificios, semejantes a mezquitas o catedrales antiguas. . . No parecía una ciudad moderna, sino una antigua ciudad europea'.

"Cada año, entre el 21 de junio y el 10 de julio, una 'ciudad fantasma' aparece en el cielo, sobre un glaciar en Alaska; sus edificios parecen ser los de la ciudad de Bristol, Inglaterra; por ello se supuso que era un 'espejismo' de Bristol. Se dice que durante generaciones los nativos de Alaska han conocido estas representaciones repetidas y que, en mayo de 1901, una expedición científica partió de San Francisco y fue a investigar. Se dice también que, excepto por ligeros cambios, año tras año el panorama es siempre el mismo. Jour. Roy. Met. Soc. 27-158.

"Varios científicos salieron de Victoria, B. C., al Monte Fairweather, en Alaska, a estudiar un espejismo repetido de una ciudad en el cielo, que fue descubierto por el Duc d'Abruzzi, quien lo vio y lo dibujó. *La Nature*, 1901-1-303".

Viene de la pág. 14

## APOYO DE...

me tomó muchos años convencer a las personas del CNES para que le ~~temo~~ran en cuenta, por eso me ~~temo~~ que no podemos esperar ver los resultados el día de mañana".

LOS CIENTIFICOS:  
LA MEJOR CARTA  
DE PRESENTACION

Jacques Vallée expresó su opinión en los siguientes términos: "Pienso que la reunión fue muy

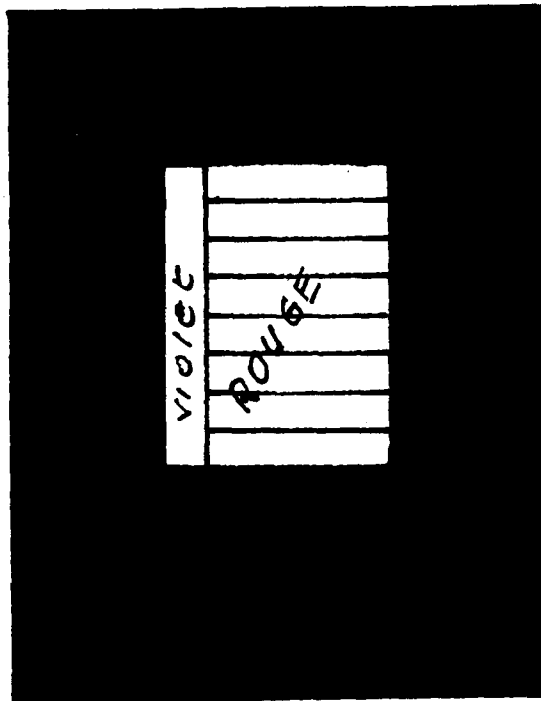
## Un curieux Phénomène

Consultant une ancienne revue des Sciences et de leurs applications : «COSMOS - LES MONDES», j'ai eu la surprise de découvrir dans le n° 712 du 17 juillet 1898, une curieuse observation, dont je vous donne le texte, ci-dessous, ainsi qu'une reproduction que j'ai faite du dessin qui l'accompagnait.

### CURIEUX METEORE

Le 4 septembre 1897 au soir, sortant de chez moi à 8 h 35 (20 h 35 sans doute) je découvrais entre la Grande Ourse et la Petite Ourse, une étoile rouge de l'apparence de Mars. La lumière était tranquille. Sachant que cela ne pouvait être une planète, je pris une jumelle qui me montra un disque bien conformé de 1 millimètre au plus. Cela me fit supposer que ce point lumineux devait être assez près de la terre. A l'aide de ma lunette astronomique, et avec un grossissement de 75, le disque disparut et fit place à une partie lumineuse rectangulaire. Sur un côté existait une bande couleur violette, et le reste était rouge avec des raies noires, assez régulièrement espacées. De chaque côté on devinait une partie noire sur le fond du ciel. Pendant que je plaçais un grossissement de 150, le point lumineux diminuait d'intensité. Lorsque la lunette fut au point l'étoile jeta encore quelques éclats et disparut. Il était 8 h 45. Je vis ce phénomène pendant dix minutes. Il était certainement visible depuis quelques temps, mais non la veille. Ce n'était point un bolide, car il resta stationnaire le temps de mon observation. Sa distance était plutôt dans les espaces planétaires : le grossissement de 75 fois le montrait un peu plus gros que Jupiter. Le peu de durée du phénomène ne me permit point de faire d'autres remarques. Je vous signale ce fait, espérant que d'autres personnes l'auront vu dans des meilleures conditions.

CHUSTREMAN



Dessin d'un phénomène observé vers 20 h 35 entre la Grande et la Petite Ourse par M. CHUSTREMAN le 4 septembre 1898 à Lille (France).

M. FIEFFE a fait des recherches mais n'a rien trouvé qui correspondait au phénomène observé. Il est à signaler cependant que des recherches sur des ouvrages de 1897 à 1899 ne manqueraient pas d'intérêt car de nombreuses observations d'objets étranges ont été relatées à cette époque, tant en France qu'à l'étranger.

Suite de la p. 21 :

### Nos activités

Nous serions reconnaissants aux lecteurs qui voudraient nous aider en nous adressant :

- les timbres oblitérés qu'ils reçoivent, même ordinaires, de France et autres pays.
- toute carte, même ancienne (quel que soit le lieu, le pays, l'échelle).
- livres et ouvrages divers, même anciens, traitant des régions de France (vie, activité, coutumes, légendes, géographie, météorologie).

Informez-nous de tout appel de détecteur en précisant : date, heure, lieu, type de détecteur, s'il y a eu observation ou photographie et quelle est cette observation.

Il ne sera plus adressé de plans ou répondu au courrier qui ne respectera pas les consignes ci-dessus.

Responsable «Techniques et Recherches» :  
Christian De Zan - 53, le Parc - 78540 VERNUILLET.

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L, Feb - 81

LDLN

# La «nube» luminosa sobre Madrid en 1.896

arturo gómez villalba

Dentro de la investigación histórica y precediendo a la gran oleada de 1897 se presenta este caso, casi desconocido en la Ufología hasta el momento, que tuvo lugar en Madrid el día 10 de febrero de 1896 y que fue interpretado por algunos de los más destacados científicos de la época como fenómeno natural, entre ellos José de Castro Pulido, Catedrático de la Universidad Central (que expondría curiosamente una explicación por los rayos globulares), pero el caso, ciertamente no da síntomas de ello como tal fenómeno natural. Se publicó un boletín al respecto, reflejándose la noticia en algunos periódicos locales, así como en una revista de divulgación científica denominada «La Naturaleza» (febrero 1896), siendo estas las fuentes de investigación.

El suceso se desarrolló de la siguiente forma, tal como nos lo describe un testigo presencial:

«...El testigo, persona de buen criterio y gran ilustración que se hallaba en aquel mismo instante mirando a Oriente en el Paseo de Santa Engracia de esta corte, se anunció a las 9 h. 29 m. 30 s. de la mañana con un resplandor vivísimo, cuya intensidad competía con la luz solar, y que iluminó fuertemente las fachadas de los edificios que a la sazón estaban en sombra. En aquel momento vio por su derecha, como en medio de la calle, a la altura de un tejado (efecto de la perspectiva) un cúmulo de nubes casi redondo de unos tres decímetros de diámetro aparente, blanquísimo y de materia muy densa, del cual seguidamente empezó a desprenderse por la parte superior izquierda un como rizo, que terminaba en forma redonda y ensanchaba; este fue alargándose juntamente con otro que después apareció por la derecha, y al cabo de pocos segundos formaba ya él toda una masa nublosa en forma de pera invertida, que tendría una altura aparente de un metro, poco más o menos; continuó creciendo en todas direcciones, aunque más en la vertical que en la horizontal, al mismo tiempo que marchaba hacia Oriente, hasta que llegó a su desarrollo máximo, tomando una apariencia fantástica y siniestra. Entonces conservando siempre la forma antedicha, alcanzaba ya una altura aparente quizás superior a tres metros, y terminaba en una aureola espléndida, en cuyo centro se veía un disco blanquísimo de dos a tres decímetros de diámetro. La trepidación de la atmósfera (explosión) llegó a tierra en ese momento (9 h. 30 m. y 45 ó 50 s.) seca y terrible al principio, más suave y acompasada después, obligando al testigo a dar, a pesar suyo, uno o dos pasos hacia la izquierda. Desapareció con esto el globo interior, y la nube se diluyó y empezó a teñirse de escarlata y violeta, produciendo un efecto encantador (véase lámina adjunta), palideciendo al mismo tiempo que se deformaba y adelgazándose hasta llegar a conseguir unos seis grados en el sentido longitudinal y

uno y medio aproximadamente en el de su anchura, mostró en su extremidad S. E. un pequeño apéndice oscuro como de denso humo, que se asemejaba en su color sombrío a las nubes de tempestad. Empujada por los vientos superiores, pues la región inferior estaba en calma, dicha nube única que se destacaba sobre la bóveda celeste, a la sazón purísima orientada de N. E. a S. S. O. desde el punto correspondiente al S. S. O. y a unos 11 grados de distancia cenital en que se hallaba situada, caminó muy lentamente hacia el E. N. E., disolviéndose a medida que avanzaba y quedando bastante después del mediodía con la apariencia de un cirrus ligero, a unos 65 grados del cenit.»

Posteriormente a la explosión se encontraron supuestos fragmentos, de pequeñas dimensiones encontrados en sitios diferentes. El primer fragmento tiene un volumen de 20 cm.<sup>3</sup>, siendo encontrado cerca del Hipódromo e incrustado en el suelo, la superficie externa era lisa e irregular, de color oscuro. Un segundo grupo compuesto de dos fragmentos encontrados en el km. 7 de la carretera de Madrid-Castellón y en la calle Serrano, fueron adquiridos por el Observatorio Astronómico, el primero pesaba 19 gramos y el segundo 52 gramos, ambos estaban cubiertos de una capa negro mate delgada.

Haciendo referencia al análisis de los datos meteorológicos, el día 9 de febrero, a las 9 de la mañana, la altura barométrica era de 777,3 mm., la temperatura de 2'5 °C sobre O. El día 10, día del suceso, a las 9 de la mañana la altura era de 772,6 mm. y la temperatura de 4'5 °C, aunque hubo un hecho extraño a la misma hora, primeramente una repentina subida en el barómetro de 1 mm. y 7 décimas, pasando posteriormente a situación normal y bajando más tarde a 7 décimas de mm. El día 11 la altura fue de 777,1 mm. y la temperatura de 4'9 °C. Dato en común a los tres días era una pequeña fuerza de viento E. N. E., así como el cielo totalmente despejado.

Así pues, aquí se presenta un caso más de sustento a las bases del fenómeno, cuya principal particularidad es la fecha aproximativa a la oleada de 1897. Puntos a destacar en el caso es el rizo desprendido, la forma de pera invertida, el disco blanquísimo, la explosión y ante todo ese camuflaje en forma de nube que ya ha sido observado desde siempre a lo largo de toda la casuística.

Los fragmentos son otro dato importante, pero desgraciadamente no queda prueba patente de su evidencia física.

Por fin, como indudable prueba de carácter científico, nos encontramos ante ese extraño cambio brusco de altura barométrica.

Madrid, 12 de diciembre de 1979.

And now we can complete the transition by considering a case which by no stretch of the imagination can be explained away as a slow moving green fireball, and is even less like ball-lightning.

**Case 7.** On the morning of December 20, 1895, a strange appearance in the sky was observed from Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. A brilliantly white luminous body passed overhead from west to east, until at about 15 degrees above the eastern horizon it seemed to stand still in the skies for about fifteen minutes or more. Some descriptions referred to "an enormous wheel"; according to others, whatever it was, appeared to be the size of a table. The noise of its passage through the air was reported to be heard, and eventually it just disappeared without any audible or visible explosion.

This last case is as unlike the familiar flying saucer reports as it is unlike ball lightning or green fireballs, and it may be some entirely new phenomenon. This is the important thing to note. It is quite certain that many UFOs are lenticular

clouds, others are motor car headlights, Will-o-the-Wisp, Venus, Jupiter, slow moving green fireballs, or ball lightning. This does NOT, however, mean that all sightings can be reduced to this, or any other circumscribed list of standard 'explanations'. It is even more fatuous to attempt to reduce the extraordinary variety of appearances, conveniently lumped together under the heading of UFOs, to any one of these categories.

Almost all scientists now admit the overwhelming probability that life of some kind is widely distributed throughout the entire Universe, and although it is only about ten years since space flight was described as "utter bilge", it is also widely admitted that manned spacecraft will explore the solar system, and unmanned probes reach for the nearer stars, within the next twenty years. In these circumstances, it is far more "unscientific" to try to dismiss all unexplained aerial appearances as familiar phenomena than it is to hold the open minded view that some of them may be the artefacts of extraterrestrial communities.

1895

### CONGRATULATIONS

Our readers will be pleased to learn that our valued friend and contributor, Jacques Vallée, has successfully concluded his latest university course, and has been awarded his Ph.D. in Computing Science.

Dr. Vallée has now taken a post at an important computing centre in Chicago.

### PIECE FOR A JIG-SAW

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6

# Manos de fuego

1.897

IGNACIO DARNAUDE ROJAS-MARCOS

Cabeza del Rey Don Pedro, 9 - 2.º B  
41004 - SEVILLA (Spain)

por Elsie Dubugras  
Brasil

D-109

## El sello del purgatorio

A partir de la devoción y piedad por las almas del purgatorio, ocurrieron los fenómenos que se conocen como "manos de fuego". Las almas, invitadas por los fieles a manifestarse, provocaron la aparición de pequeñas manos impresas como si fuese al fuego en tejidos y papel, pañuelos y libros. Algunos intérpretes dicen que este fuego, aunque sea purificador, no es de la misma naturaleza que aquél que conocemos aquí en la Tierra.

A mediados de 1893, el padre misionero Vittore Jouet, devoto de las almas del purgatorio, erigió en Roma un pequeño oratorio donde se celebrarían misas y oraciones en sufragio de tales espíritus en sufrimiento. Cuatro años más tarde tendría lugar allí el primer fenómeno que, en la interpretación del padre y de los fieles, comprobó la existencia de aquellas almas y la certeza de que ellas conocían y sentían los efectos benéficos de sus trabajos espirituales.

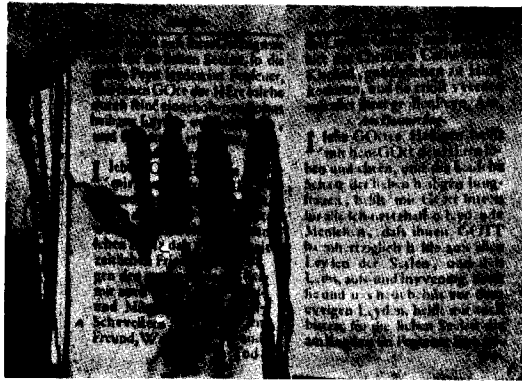
El fenómeno ocurrió de la siguiente manera: el día 15 de noviembre de 1897, fecha escogida para una fiesta de beneficencia, la pequeña capilla estaba repleta de fieles. El servicio religioso ya había comenzado cuando, en el altar adornado para tal ocasión, irrumpió una llama. Una vez apagada ésta se vio en el lateral izquierdo, claramente impreso, el rostro de un sufridor. Esta interesante pieza, que fue conservada cuidadosamente, se puede ver en el Museo del Purgatorio, en Roma. Sin embargo, las autoridades eclesiásticas nunca se pronunciaron a favor o en contra de su autenticidad, dejando que cada cual lo interprete a su manera.

El Padre Jouet, intrigado con el fenómeno, emprendió viajes por Italia, Francia, Alemania, y Bélgica para descubrir si comprobaciones semejantes existían en otros sitios. Sus viajes fueron exitosos ya que dio con las más diversas pruebas.

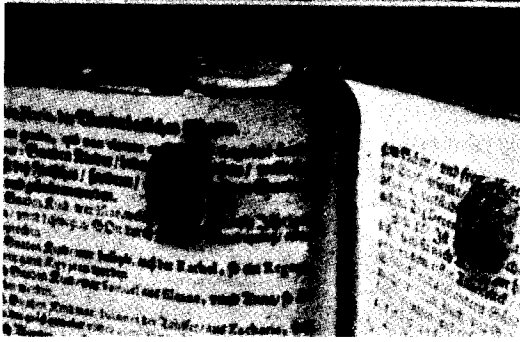
## Las visiones de la vieja beata

Una de las más curiosas se relaciona al caso de una beata de la ciudad de Geilaschein, cerca de Baden, en Alemania. Margarete Schaeffner, según sus conocidos, era una mujer profundamente mística que mantuvo contacto durante sesenta y ocho años con las almas del purgatorio. Estos contactos no eran sólo místicos. Ella veía los espíritus en sufrimiento, y los describía tan minuciosamente que las personas que habían conocido a los muertos se sorprendían de su exactitud. También tuvo pruebas materiales, manos que dejaron señales de fuego en objetos que le pertenecían.

Margarete, según declaraciones de personas del lugar, era católica ferviente y acostumbraba a narrar sus experiencias al cura de la iglesia, pero ni éste ni los misioneros que pasaban por allí, otorgaban la menor importancia a lo que ella relataba. Muy por el contrario. Decían que todo no iba más allá de su propia imaginación, estimulada por la superstición popular. Llegaron a prohibirle que repitiera sus historias a otra gente y, en cierta ocasión, incluso le impidieron comulgar por un período de tres meses. Desgraciadamente para Margarete, ni siquiera aquellos con quienes convivía creían en lo que ella hablaba. Estos hechos la entristecieron profundamente, haciendo que finalmente le



*¿Fuego de remordimiento? ¿Fuego purificador? ¿O simplemente un fuego corriente?*



*Los viejos libros sagrados de oraciones son objeto preferido para las marcas de las manos de fuego.*

pidiera a las almas que le diesen una prueba concreta de su existencia, del sufrimiento del purgatorio, y de que las oraciones y las misas a su favor las ayudaban. Con tal evidencia esperaba convencer a los incrédulos de que los relatos no eran fruto de su imaginación y de que tampoco era víctima de influencias demoníacas, como pretendían algunos.

Emma Schubert, una enfermera que conoció a Margarete muy de cerca, presenció una prueba y supo además de otras.

Schubert relata que una de las pruebas tuvo

lugar durante un servicio religioso. Margarete fue a misa y, en profundo recogimiento, se arrodilló para aguardar la comunión. Sostenía un pañuelo entre las manos y, cuando el padre se acercó con la hostia notó una mancha oscura en el mismo que aumentaba de tamaño. Margarete no percibió nada, por estar con los ojos cerrados. Después de comulgar, volvió a su sitio y, arrodillada, continuó rezando. El padre, impresionado con la mancha en el pañuelo, buscó a Margarete después de la misa, pidiéndoselo para examinarlo. El pañuelo estaba en su bolso y cuando fue abierto ambos vieron con gran sorpresa que una mano de fuego estaba impresa en él. Margarete sabía que esto era la respuesta a su oración y pensó que el sacerdote se convencería de la verdad. Pero no ocurrió tal cosa. La duda del sacerdote persistió, incluso después que fuesen exhibidas semejantes pruebas.

Margarete recibió otras pruebas además de la del pañuelo. Una de ellas es especial y digna de tener en cuenta ya que fue presenciada por Emma Schubert. Cuenta ella que Margarete, al sentir que las almas necesitaban oraciones y misas, volvió a pedir nuevas pruebas, pues con ellas esperaba convencer a otros de que hicieran intercesiones y misas. Después de algunos días obtuvo la respuesta. Debía colocar un trozo de cuero sobre una mesa en otra sala. Cuando, siguiendo siempre las instrucciones de las almas, fue a buscar el trozo de cuero, vio que dos manos estaban impresas en fuego. Esta prueba fue enviada a las autoridades eclesiásticas de Friburgo, en presencia de Emma Schubert. El cuero grabado se encuentra hoy en la parroquia de Gerlachsheim (Alemania), donde ha sido fotografiado varias veces. El pañuelo impreso durante la misa estaba en los archivos eclesiásticos de Friburgo, pero fue devuelto posteriormente al Museo por el arzobispo Grobes.

### **Libro de oraciones del siglo XVIII**

Otra prueba que debería constar en el acervo del Museo del Purgatorio, como se le conoce hoy, se encuentra en la Baja Baviera, en poder de la familia Hackenberg. Es un pequeño libro de oraciones del siglo XVIII. Tiene 10 centímetros de largo por 6 cms. de ancho. Está bien conservado, a pesar de haber servido como "prueba de fuego" para un caso semejante al de Margarete. Se observa en las páginas 12 y 13 la impresión de

dos pequeñas manos. Se pueden distinguir los cinco dedos, la pequeña palma y parte de la muñeca. Un detalle interesante es que los dedos dan la impresión de estar descarnados, de que son manos de un minúsculo esqueleto.

Respecto a este caso se cuenta la siguiente historia: Cierta vez, un miembro de la familia Hæckenberg hizo una peregrinación a Grulich, un gran centro religioso. La peregrinación fue hecha en homenaje a su fallecido padre que el romero sentía que necesitaba oraciones. Después de cumplir la promesa, el joven regresó a casa, volviendo por un atajo a través del bosque. Cuando estaba a medio camino, se le apareció la figura del padre, que agradeció las oraciones y la intención con que habían sido hechas. Como prueba de su gratitud, grabó dos pequeñas manos en el libro que su hijo llevaba.

Existe otro caso semejante, mucho más reciente. El libro forma parte del acervo de una iglesia en la región del Sarre, en Alemania Federal. Se cuenta que durante una misa en sufragio de un alma, un fiel —que debía ser clarividente— vio aproximarse a un espíritu. El espíritu, una vez cerca, señaló el misal con un dedo y desapareció. Después de la misa, movido por un impulso que no supo explicar, la persona volvió a abrir el libro para examinarlo y vio, en la página en la que se implora misericordia e indulgencia divina para las almas sufridoras, que se encuentran en las profundidades del infierno, la impresión en fuego de una mano. Pero hay otro aspecto del fenómeno que debe observarse. El misal estaba en latín, lengua poco conocida por los legos pero muy familiar al clero. Sólo un sacerdote conocería además el lugar preciso donde se implora el auxilio que las almas necesitan para su sufragio.

### **Cuernos en la peluca negra**

Otro investigador interesado en fenómenos de esta naturaleza descubrió uno de los casos más curiosos. Bajo una placa de vidrio colocada para protegerla, se ve una mano estampada en fuego. Está en una mesa que debe haber pertenecido al Palacio de Justicia, en Lublín (Polonia). La mano es excepcionalmente grande, no muestra señales de falanges y da la impresión de estar esquelmatizada.

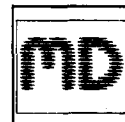
Según la leyenda, hubo en aquella ciudad un litigio entre una viuda pobre y un rico magnate. Este reclamó para sí los bienes de

la viuda y, habiendo sobornado a los jueces, ganó el juicio. La viuda, desesperada por perder todo lo que poseía, levantó la mano en dirección a un crucifijo colgado en la pared y gritó: "Si Satanás hubiese dictado sentencia, ésta habría sido más justa".

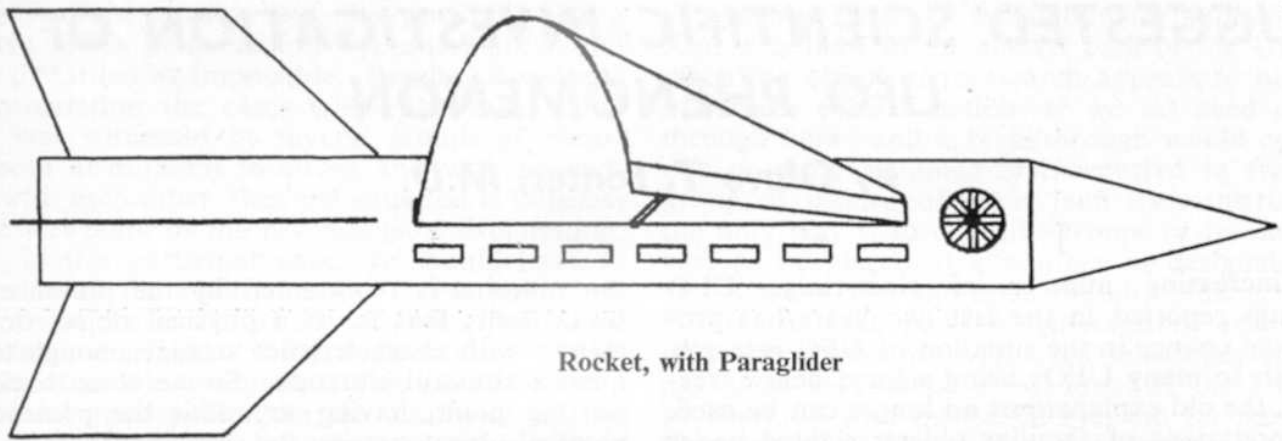
Los que se encontraban presentes vieron enseguida a algunos jueces de extraña apariencia entrando en la sala. Sus pelucas eran negras con dos pequeños cuernos. Atemorizado, el secretario volvió a convocar la sesión y el abogado del diablo, con una exposición corta y sobria, dio una explicación respecto de los derechos de la viuda a la fortuna de su difunto marido. El tribunal, en vista de las pruebas presentadas, sentenció a favor de la viuda... sentencia mucho más justa que la anterior.

Fue sólo al día siguiente del juicio que el escribano notó que, en la mesa del Tribunal, había la impresión de una mano descomunadamente grande, todavía visible hoy.

Son variadas las hipótesis para explicar cómo estos y otros fenómenos de dicha naturaleza han tenido lugar. Los libros sagrados hablan de "fuego del infierno". En el Nuevo Testamento está la parábola del hombre rico que murió y, abrasado por las llamas, pidió una gota de agua a Lázaro. Los teólogos y los místicos indagan sobre la naturaleza de dicho fuego, sin llegar a un acuerdo. Todos concuerdan, sin embargo, que el fuego es el elemento purificador. Pero según el pensamiento moderno sería el fuego del remordimiento, del arrepentimiento, del dolor, y no el fuego tal como lo conocemos en la Tierra. Con todo, el fenómeno está allí para ser visto. Manos impresas en fuego o, como ha ocurrido en San Pablo, ropas y muebles incendiándose. Un investigador opina que tiene lugar una materialización rápida, pero no explica cómo la materialización imprime su mano ardiente en objetos.







Rocket, with Paraglider

## 19th CENTURY PARAGLIDER?

by W. H. Watson

Our contributor, who lives in South Australia, makes an interesting suggestion that seems to underline the idea that the Ufonants are generally a few decades ahead of us with their devices.

WHILST perusing recent articles on the mystery airships over the United States between 1880 and 1897, a particular peculiarity of the descriptions struck me repeatedly as being exceedingly odd and yet strangely familiar.

Apart from the fore-and-aft mounted propellers, one reads again and again of sails, great wings, or occasionally large fins. Some reports mention light wings, triangular in shape. "Fragile construction" seems to be a prominent feature, most notably in an April 9, 1897, report from Illinois, mentioned by Jerome Clark.<sup>1</sup> The same report adds that "a short distance above the body, lateral structures resembling wings or sails" were noted.

We hear from Donald B. Hanlon<sup>2</sup> of one over Iowa three days later, on which "the vibration of the wings could be plainly seen."

Reading of sails in connection with airships recalled to mind medieval legends of "sky people" or "celestial sailors" cavorting around the firmament in airboats or "cloud ships," closely related in appearance to the sailing vessels of their day.

Like others before me I assumed that each generation was interpreting what it had seen in terms of what was familiar to it.

But there was an obvious anomaly. Who in the nineteenth century would have visualised flexible sails above an airship? And triangular wings were, if anything, even less feasible inventions at that time.

Something niggled at the back of my mind, and remained niggling for some six months.

Then the February, 1967, copy of the British Interplanetary Society's magazine *Spaceflight* arrived, and there it was on page 50—*A New Recovery System for Sounding Rockets* by W. Pittelkow, of Dornier-System GmbH, West Germany . . . the Paraglider.

To find a concise explanation of the paraglider I turned to the March, 1964, edition, page 54,

wherein G. Scheffler stated: "Two lifting-surfaces constructed on the paraglider principle are covered with a metallic silk material. They can be easily folded together and stowed in the centre of the rocket. When the rocket nears the Earth on the return leg of the trajectory, a command from a ground station via a compressed air mechanism releases the flexible wings from their compartments. The thin leading-edge booms hinge outwards and between them and the rocket body conical half-cups are formed."

The wing dihedral is 30°, angle of sweepback 56°. The experimental rocket has four conventional elevator-rudder fins at the tail, and the paraglider wing-tips are attached to the body by extending booms beneath the wing fabric.

America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration is also testing a similar device for landing the *Gemini* capsule.

Recalling Captain James Hooton's description<sup>3</sup> we read of "condensed air and aeroplanes" . . . "The aeroplanes suddenly sprang forward, turning their sharp ends skyward, then the rudders at the end of the ship began to veer to one side . . ."

Coincidental descriptions—paragliders operating in a reverse manner to that intended by Dornier-System, or am I too interpreting the mystery in terms of what is familiar to our generation?

**Postscript:** In addition to the mystery airship sightings, the paraglider reminds me of the weird objects observed by Vauriat, France, on August 29, 1962 (FLYING SAUCER REVIEW July-August 1963).

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Clark, J. *The Strange Case of the 1897 Airship*, FSR July/August 1966
- <sup>2</sup> Hanlon, D. B. *Texas Odyssey of 1897*, FSR September/October 1966. Also, in collaboration with Vallée, J., *Airships over Texas*, FSR, January/February 1967.
- <sup>3</sup> Captain Hooton left a sketch of the airship he claimed to have encountered, and this Heath-Robinson looking object will be found adorning the cover of the July/August 1966 issue of the REVIEW.