

THE AMERICAN UFO WAVE OF 1.896-97

TRANSCRIPTION FROM "THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS" DALLAS, USA

MONDAY APRIL 19th. 1.897. PAGE 5:



"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. Back, 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 body about sixty feet in length, to which is attached two immense aeroplanes and the motive power is an immense wheel at

attached two immense propellers, one 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 dynamiters 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."

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"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 around the continent of north pole land. You wonder how I speak English?"

well, the polar expedition of Sir Hugh Willoughby in 1.742, 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 (HOPELESS) (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 (PIPES) through water steam to convey it all over the inhabitable part of the country and the (SOIL IS KEPT) 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 iceber, 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)



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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 stopped 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 off my hat in adoration to the hand 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, flutes 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. Lest 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.

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"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 tell you I will give 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).





November 24th 1982

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Dear Sirs,

. Spain

I refer to "INFO JOURNAL" , N° 38, page 8 , concerning "the lost Arctic expedition of Sir John Franklin".

I am sending you enclosed a curious text from "The Dallas Morning News" , Dallas, Texas, April 19th 1897, about the great UFO wave of 1896-97, from which you can gather information on alleged Sir John Franklin expedition. By the way this entire article printed on Dallas newspaper is of the most remarkable interest, and as far as I know it never has been published in modern times.

My congratulations for the general high quality of INFO JOURNAL.

Best wishes.

Truly yours

Juanic Vannaude

1997/1997: LDIN 90 p 4

1997: LDIN 120 p 5



cade: La prima quindicina del mese dovrebbe trascorrere piuttosto serenamente. Nella seconda, invece, l'in-



cade: Probabili crisi di nervosismo e tensione dalle dall'Influenza Mercurio, soprattutto nella seconda quindicina. Se possibile, evita.



cade: La situazione un po' caotica del mese precedente dovrebbe tornare a normalizzarsi si con l'avvicinarsi del

1997: FSR 130 p 29

commento in particolare. Per i nati nella 3a decade: il vostro peggior nemico sarà la gelosia, che può portar-

Per i nati nella 3a decade: sarie portarsi a tentare nuovi approcci sentimentali, ai quali però, sarebbe bene dare un'importanza molto

Per i nati nella 3a decade: Permane l'influenza negativa di Giove, che si rinfletterà

1997: FSR 92 p 14

1997/1997: FSR 124 p 10



Per i nati nella 1a decade: Spensieratezza cambia la vostra parola



Per i nati nella 1a decade: Nettuno e Marte nella seconda quindicina.



cade: Nettuno, Plutone e Venere in aspetto negativo, faranno il pos-

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and made of "free silver." A door opened and three strange looking beings stepped out. They were like regular men except that there was no "demarcation between the nose and the mouth" and they had immense gills on the side of the head. These gills resembled elephant ears and moved in and out as in respiration. The mouth extended from gill to gill and they had a huge fin down their backs. Their feet were pointed and stuck in the ground. The feet prevented them from slipping off the ship and the fin was used to guide them in case they did. Their hands were simply claws and this was because in some places the air was so heavy they had to dig their way around. The mayor spoke to them and found that they were from Mars. This was followed by a political discussion in which the mayor wanted to know how many votes there were on Mars. After a few more political cuts and discussions, the craft left.

The Ida Grove (IA) Era, of April 15th, said that the airship had been seen there on April 14th. It was in three sections: the first section was filled with newspaper men in search of the North Pole; the second section was too far away; and the third section contained the Des Moines Bulldozers and Carpetbaggers in charge of Dick Clarkson.

The Nonpareil of Council Bluffs, Ia., of April 16th, reported that the airship had been seen by a large number of people on April 15th. It appeared as generally described in the newspaper accounts and had a red and green light. A reporter got a "strong glass" and saw a package drop from it. He found it to be wrapped in manilla paper and tied with red and white string, like that used by druggists. The contents were written on rare, old parchment and concerned itself with the location of former Council Bluff residents and what they were doing there. It also touched on present residents and political figures.

The Humboldt Co. Independent of Humboldt, Ia., of April 22nd, <sup>1897</sup> ran a dispatch sent to Iowa Capital. It related that at 0300 on April 17th the airship landed in Lake Macouis. Over 173,000 people had been to see it. The water of the lake was heated so much that the fish were all cooked for 1/2 mile in all directions. The people were fed with fish and bread. It was a Billy goat that had eaten some of Dr. Prices' baking powder, who rose and the lasting glow of the powder kept him up. The people were taking a collection to buy him more powder so he can continue the journey.

The Indianapolis (IN) Sentinel, of April 18th, reported that the airship had been seen there early that morning. It made a whirring sound and descended rapidly. It was a large black object and was brightly lighted. It eventually landed on Soldier's Monument. A voice came from it and gave a very long oration concerning man and his quest for flight.

The Lansing (MI) News, of April 29th, reported that on April 26th, the airship landed at the Taylor House. The crew consisted of a correspondent of the Arizona Kicker and three others. After 15 minutes for refreshments, they left for Cuba. From there they were going east to watch the "Greeks kick the Turks for a few hours." Then to Topeka to "find out all about the bribery investigating business, and how much hush money representative Keefer got from Bailey Maggoner." The ship would stop at the Taylor House next Monday, at 1940, for more refreshments. The News of May 6th reported that the airship landed on May 3rd as promised.

The Mount Gilead (O) Union Register, of May 12th, reported that the airship circled and landed at Cardington on May 6th. It was cigar shaped, had great spreading wings, propellers, dynamos, headlight, etc.. An old man got out and anchored it to a tree with a steel cable. The reporter followed him back into the craft, where he met a beautiful woman. Both of them appeared to be Jewish. She said he was the first man she had a chance to talk to in 1800 years and that the old man was the "Wandering Jew." He then questioned the old man about the airship. He said he built it because he had gotten tired of walking. It was propelled by electricity and it's buoyancy was from ideas. There was a tank filled with a "double distilled ether extracted from the production of men like Plato, Washington, Jefferson, and Mr. J. Bryan, by a process that has cost me hundreds of years of hard toil. Occasionally, I shove in a bunch of ideas composed of sophistry and false reasoning, and when they come in contact with that ether they immediately explode and produce a pressure that is unconceivable." He then threw in a copy of the St. Louis republican convention and the pressure went from 50 to 100 pounds. He threw in an article from a Mt. Gilead republican paper and the pressure went to 1000 pounds. The craft suddenly lifted. The reporter jumped out, used the paper as a parachute, and landed safely.

The Bellefontaine (O) Republican, of May 14, printed a letter written by "A. Rustic" in which he reported that he had seen the airship last night. He was walking home from a Populist caucus when he saw a strange craft with a bright light fore and aft. It slowly settled on Hoge's Summit. He went in

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il giorno dopo l'arrivo. Non si è mai capito bene questa fuga.

In quanto allo Yeti, schiavo dei cinesi, si possono ammettere 3 alternative:

1° Sono individui o smarriti o in missione sul pianeta terra con compiti di ricerche minerarie, specie uranifere, ma non solo uranifere. Questi individui avendo le stesse caratteristiche dei ragazzi lupo riconoscono i metalli anche se questi sono avvolti in panni ad occhi chiusi e solo al tatto (il che è un po' strano per essere una caratteristica terrestre). Dato che i terrestri spesso li uccidono, gli yeti assumono un atteggiamento passivo in apparenza ma di prospezione del terreno nei campi « effettivo ».

2° alternativa: Culturalmente debbono apparire primitivi, almeno in alcuni settori. Anche noi, ad esempio, su un altro pianeta potremmo apparire primitivi, perché l'evoluzione non è che un perfezionare il proprio adattamento ad un dato ambiente.

3° alternativa: Dovendo soggiornare a volte per periodi piuttosto lunghi, dopo la perdita dell'UFO, il troppo ossigeno terrestre agirebbe in senso negativo sui centri nervosi (da noi bambini troppo ossigenati, appena nati, nell'incubatrice sono stati resi ciechi o sordi). Anche i reni non svolgono bene la loro funzione depuratrice e molti Yeti puzzano di urina.

Alcuni ragazzi-lupo muoiono di nefrite e con edemi o pleuriti sempre in conseguenza di alterazioni renali. Lo studioso sovietico Zaitzev ritiene Gesù Cristo un individuo extraterrestre. E non solo Zaitzev. Non voglio esprimere un giudizio in merito, anche se mi sembra che esistano notevoli addentellati tra ufologia e religione, però io non scarto mai nulla per partito preso o per pregiudizio. Posso solo ricordare che quando venne trafitto dalla lancia sulla croce Gesù Cristo perdesse sangue misto ad acqua ed il fenomeno non è mai stato studiato accuratamente (pleurite? nefrite?).

La studiosa sovietica Anna Kofmann asserisce che un piatto appetitoso per lo Yeti è lo sterco di cavallo il che è un po' strano come gusto terrestre... sappiamo inoltre che sull'Everest sono stati trovati degli yak intatti ma senza le interiora; sappiamo del cavallo Snoopy trovato intatto senza cervello, senza midollo spinale e senza interiora dopo il passaggio di dischi volanti e sappiamo del profeta Ezechiele che ricevette da Dio l'ordine di mangiare il seguente piatto « Capitolo IV - 12. E mangia una focaccia d'orzo che sia cotta con sterco d'uomo, cuocila in loro presenza. - 15. Ed il Signore mi disse: Vedi, io ti dò sterco di bue in luogo di sterco di uomo; cuoci con esso il tuo pane ».

Non si può proprio dire che simili ricette culinarie siano di un Artusi terrestre.

Anche lo scheletro di questi Yeti presenta anomalie sconcertanti cominciando dal cranio che si presenta spesso appuntito perché esistono due ossa laterali che sovrappoendosi alle ossa temporali si congiungono sul cocuzzolo, (que-

sta forcina rovesciata potrebbe essere all'origine di alcune qualità di detector che essi hanno).

A volte le dita sono appuntite e a volte palmate (come Ramu, il ragazzo lupo) cioè con alterazioni cromosomiche e non ambientali.

Gli esami compiuti sullo scheletro di Zana, yeti femmina da lei citato, hanno sconcertato gli studiosi che non hanno potuto raggiungere una conclusione fondata. Il che è il minimo che possa capitare quando si studia un Extraterrestre.

### L'immagine riflessa

I sigg. Vincenzo Chiarelli di Agrigento, Paolo Franci di Supino (Frosinone), Carlo Bosco di Villanova Canavese (Torino), Alessandro Gabrielli, di Milano, Gerardo Imbè di Napoli, Antonio Nassi di Siena, Gianaldo Pantanella di Collesferro (Roma), Luigi Spadafora di San Giovanni in Fiore (Cosenza), Gianfranco Costelli di Torino, Antonino Capodicasa di Pescara e Giovanni Ferraris di Rapallo (Genova) scrivono rimproverando di non aver specificato meglio al signor Traviglia (G.d.M. n° 15, pag. 73) che l'immagine riflessa ha la stessa velocità della luce.

• Questa risposta avrebbe lasciato insoddisfatto il Traviglia il quale esponendo per es. uno specchio al sole, riceveva immediatamente l'immagine riflessa del medesimo. Preferii a questa risposta (indubbiamente esatta) un'altra in cui spiegavo che in realtà egli riceveva qualcosa che sembrava ma non era. In parole povere che si trattava di una illusione. Bisognava in effetti aggiungere che Traviglia riceveva qualcosa che era già arrivato prima, (e portato dalla luce) in base alla equazione

SPAZIO

TEMPO =

V (velocità luce)

Ma si consoli il sig. Traviglia. Anche Einstein è caduto sulla buccia di banana dell'ottica riflessa (che tra l'altro è una materia assai interessante come scrisse). Infatti interpretò alla rovescia l'esperimento Michelson dimenticando che l'esito di questo esperimento è interpretabile con la relatività di Galileo ammettendo che esista una corrente di spazio fluido che investe la terra con una velocità relativa al nostro pianeta di 30 km. al secondo e velocità assoluta di 60 km. al secondo, come risulta dagli esperimenti di Todeschini di Bergamo.

### Fisiologia dei mostri

Il sig. Amilcare Ramponi di Viserba (Rimini), V.le Palazzi 19, scrive:

« Prima di finire sugli UFO (vedi parte della lettera nel numero scorso del G.d.M. indirizzata a Conti) due parole sull'articolo di Angelo Moretti (N° 10 pag. 28). Possibile che gli Americani USA tanto precisi, meticolosi, non abbiano esaminato a fondo all'esterno e all'interno i mostri fatti di materiale sintetico? ».

• Caro Ramponi, un conto è esaminarli,

un conto è capirli. Un conto è l'analisi veramente serena ed obbiettiva, un conto sono le pregiudiziali, anche se inconscie, che agiscono da freni inibitori all'analisi serena.

Esempio: una commissione governativa di scienziati australiani obbligata dall'opinione pubblica ad interessarsi del cosiddetto mostro di Tasmania e inviata appositamente sul posto in aereo, fuggè addirittura il giorno dopo senza dare spiegazione di questo comportamento alquanto strano e senza dare spiegazioni scientifiche. Altro esempio: nel 1896 a St. Augustine, sulla costa dell'Atlantico, l'oceano spinse sulla spiaggia un altro di questi mostri. Le analisi da allora ad oggi continuano senza che chimici e biologi ci capiscano nulla all'istituto Smitsonian americano. Esiste una parte esterna di colore roseo con riflessi argentei al sole, e straordinariamente dura tanto che un coltello lanciato contro di essa schizza lontano senza intaccarla. La parte interna sembra formata da polimeri più trattabili ed essendo formata da cellule regolari contenenti silicio, è stata etichettata come tessuto connettivo di piovra gigante anche perché si trovarono delle specie di mozziconi di enormi tentacoli. Ora qui bisogna far notare una cosa. La Florida è zona notoriamente calda e le piovre sono più nei mari freddi.

Questi tentacoli, posseduti anche dal mostro di Tasmania sono visibilissimi anche in alcuni UFO in volo.

Lo scrittore americano Fuller ha posto in risalto come questi tentacoli a volte escano dall'UFO e raggiungono i fili ad alta tensione. Questi tubi-tentacoli sono visibili anche sulla famosa pietra che ricopre il sarcofago di Palenque e sembra che persino Ezechiele ne accenni nella sua famosa visione. Anche nei libri sacri dell'India, come il Mahabharata, sono descritti questi tubi-tentacoli come « trombe di elefanti che lanciano lampi di fuoco dai danaya » cioè dai dischi volanti.

Per quanto riguarda le altre caratteristiche e le altre comparazioni vedi mio articolo sul N° 4 del G.d.M. 1971.

### Problemi di fisica

Il signor Giuseppe Baldini di Mazara (Trapani), via Catania 27, scrive:

« Signor Moretti, voglia rispondere a tutte queste domande: 1) Se lo spazio vuoto è pieno di particelle materiali, perché esse non producono attrito sui corpi che si muovono nel vuoto per inerzia? 2) Per Lei sono ancora valide le formule di Lorentz-Einstein sulla relatività della massa, lunghezza e tempo? 3) Se la massa è davvero relativa e se le particelle nucleari si muovono a velocità ultraluminosa, queste hanno massa immaginaria, e così tutto il nucleo: com'è possibile ciò se nel nucleo degli atomi è concentrata quasi tutta la massa della materia? 4) Secondo l'effetto Doppler, un corpo con velocità 10 volte quella della luce non si può vedere in alcun modo perché qualunque onda da es-

(continua a pagina 76)

the moving coffins of Christ Church, Barbados; the lost Arctic expedition of Sir John Franklin; the Berbalang ghouls; the perpetual motion device of Orffyreus; Andrew Crosse and his acari; disappearing islands; Mersenne's numbers; M. Botineau and his remarkable eyesight; the planet "Vulcan"; and Nostradamus.

I mention the entire roster because while they are very familiar today, they owe much of their fame to the pen of Rupert T. Gould. Oddities was a best seller, and is still in print.

The success of Oddities inspired him to prepare a companion volume of similar content and style. The result was Enigmas (1929), with eleven more essays on strange and often tragic events of the past. Enigmas too was a success, and with Oddities, and together with the books of Charles Fort forms a basic library on mysterious phenomena.

Gould struck again in 1930 with The Case for the Sea Serpent. As a man of the sea, Gould was fascinated by the legends and sightings of sea monsters. His work on the subject (aside from Oudemans' The Great Sea Serpent, 1892) practically began the modern investigation of sea serpent reports, predating the efforts of Heuvelmans and Sanderson by at least thirty years.

By 1934, Gould had sufficient stature as a thoughtful and entertaining researcher to be asked to give radio talks for children. His fifteen-minute program, part of the BBC Children's Hour, was called "The Stargazer Talks." It proved to be widely popular. The term Stargazer was originally meant to indicate the focus of the show was astronomical, but Gould soon expanded this limited scope to include all variety of quaint and curious lore, from his beloved typewriters to the works of Jules Verne. The Stargazer Talks continued on the BBC into the war years, and eventually were printed up in a small book, The Stargazer Talks. Gould's accomplishments in radio gained him a position as one of the famous BBC "Brain Trust."

Gould's relatively early death in 1948 at the age of 57 was not only a loss to the world of scholarship, but also a blow to his readers and listeners, and to all those who search for answers to the world's oddities and enigmas.

Rupert T. Gould effectively bridges the gap between the work of Charles Fort, and earlier authors who wrote on strange phenomena, such as Andrew Lang, Charles McKay, Sabine Baring-Gould, and others. The pre-Fort writers were intellectuals who only dabbled in the unknown, and did better work in other areas. Lang was a folklorist; Baring-Gould was a vicar, whose best-known effort was his encyclopedic Lives of the Saints.

The two real founders of modern Fortean research therefore are Gould and Fort himself. Fort has priority of place through his earlier publication of The Book of the Damned (1919) and New Lands (1923). It is hard to say whether or not Gould was influenced to any degree by Fort, but ensuing generations show the influence of both men's influence.

And yet they were quite different, in outlook and approach. Charles Fort read voluminously in all manner of periodicals, cull through immense amounts of literature for a few fragmentary notices of some strange happening. Fort seldom followed up on his findings, but simply noted them down. Many have criticized this procedure as being superficial, which it may be, but those critics fail to understand the motives behind Fort's researches. Individual phenomena were not as important to Fort as was the whole phenomenological picture he could create for his own and others' philosophical amusement.\*

Rupert Gould, on the other hand, represents a school of thought which in practice is more common today than pure Forteanism. Gould picked his topics carefully, judging them on merits of high interest and high strangeness. Since he accumulated fewer cases than Fort, Gould made a more in-depth study of each mystery. While Fort vacuum-cleaned up huge amounts of heterogeneous data, Gould probed deeply into the details of twenty to thirty specific cases. In this way, Gould resembles the style of earlier authors; unlike them, Gould does not present his studies as mere diversions, but as serious attempts towards understanding and solution. (But would Lang, McKay, or Baring-Gould really appreciate the implication here that their works were merely

\* Recall Fort's remark that he was interested "not so much in things but in relations of things."

they heard appalling voices issue from within its walls by night and day."

One day two Spaniards happened to wander onto the ruins. "On entering one of the solitary streets, they beheld two rows of men, evidently, from their stately demeanor, hidalgos of noble blood, and cavaliers of the court. They were richly attired in the Castilian mode, with rapiers by their sides, and broad traveling hats such as were worn at the time. The two men were astonished to behold persons of their own rank and appearance apparently inhabiting that desolate place, unknown to the people of the island. They saluted them, and inquired whence they came and when they had arrived. The cavaliers maintained a gloomy silence, but courteously returned the salutation by raising their hands to their sombreros or hats, in taking off which their heads came off also, and their bodies stood decapitated. (Irving deserves an editor's medal for refraining from the use of an exclamation point at the end of that sentence.) The whole phantom assemblage then vanished. So great was the astonishment and horror of the beholders that they had nearly fallen dead, and remained stupefied for several days." (Bk. I, Ch. XI, p. 385)

#### Caucasian Natives?

Perhaps most astonishing of all was a confrontation with white men wearing white robes. In 1494 while cruising the south side of Cuba, Columbus sent a party on shore for food and water. An archer in the party wandered off to look for game. He met up with "a man in a long white dress" followed shortly thereafter by two others wearing white tunics that reached to the knees, "and the three were of as fair complexions as Europeans." (Irving seems to make a distinction between the style of the "dress" and the "tunics.") When about 30 more men armed with clubs and lances appeared in the background (it is not clear whether they also were fair-skinned), the archer fled in terror seeking aid from his companions.

When told the story, the shore party believed it and fled to the ship. When Columbus heard the story, he believed it because he had recently heard about a civilized country called Mangon that had clothed inhabitants. For the next two days he sent out search parties to make contact, but nothing was found. (Bk. VII, Ch. IV, p. 413)

Catastrophists also can find grist for

their mill in the chronicles of Columbus. The natives of Hayti had a tradition concerning a universal deluge, described in an elaborate legend. (Bk. VI, Ch. X, p. 373)

These writings and others like them suggest that homogenized history and exclusionary science conveniently skip over (or rationalize) that which does not fit. Reality, taken in the raw, is much richer, more mysterious, and less neatly categorized than many of us would like to believe.

INFO JOURNAL, No 38, JAN-FEB 1981

## Founders of Forteana:

RUPERT T. GOULD: A RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

by Paul B. Thompson

November 16, 1980, marked the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of Rupert T. Gould, the noted British author, naval officer, radio personality, and scholar, who contributed so much to the investigation of unexplained phenomena and historical mysteries. The works of Gould remain outstanding examples, classics of the genre which has come to be known as Fortean, in honor of the greatest of such researchers, Charles Fort.

Who was Rupert T. Gould, and what did he contribute to the lore of Forteana? He began his career in the Royal Navy, as did many young Englishmen of his day. Gould served actively at sea from 1906 to 1915, and from 1916 to 1927 with the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty. At sea or on land, Gould was first and foremost a scholar.

Gould's first book, a history of the marine chronometer, was published in 1923. A life-long passion for small, intricate machines led Gould to study the origins of both the marine chronometer and the typewriter; of the latter, he acquired a huge collection of assorted antique specimens, many of which were quite rare. It was fitting that Gould's first book should be on chronometers, because his last effort, published posthumously in 1949, was a history of the typewriter.

The first work Gould wrote in a Fortean vein was Oddities, which appeared in 1928 (see bibliography). In this book, Gould presented eleven essays dealing with some of the most famous yet insoluble mysteries known to man: the "Devil's Hoofmarks" seen in Devonshire in 1855;

# Science



Scientists root for 50 million-year-old bones, among them, inset, a primate jaw



three-toed dawn horse. Digging further in that spot and five adjacent areas, they retrieved 19 skulls, five eggs, over 150 jaws and hundreds of teeth, limbs and bone bits.

Like the animals from which they came, the fossils are tiny, many smaller than a matchstick. Says Krish-

talka: "One rarely finds small specimens preserved so exquisitely." Animals that have been identified include bats, monkeys, iguana-like reptiles, a possum-like marsupial and salamanders. The scientists have yet to label the new species but have linked them to the lizard and shrew families.

Such clues could help researchers better understand life in the Eocene, a time of turbulent change, climatic as well as geological. The earth was slowly cooling, and swamp areas were evaporating. As a result, hundreds of species were dying or seeking warmth farther south. The North American monkeys, for example, migrated to Central and South America. Warm-blooded beasts that could adjust to the new cold thrived, among them the forebears of pigs, cows, cats and dogs. For animals, says Stucky, the epoch "was a revolution." And with the bones unearthed for scientists to explore and understand, that revolution continues to reveal its buried secrets.

—By Natalie Angier. Reported by Timothy Loughran/New York

## Striking It Rich in Wyoming

*Paleontologists unearth a trove of early mammalian fossils*

The plains of western Wyoming are today a scarred moonscape of gray hills, but 50 million years ago they were mostly swampland, lush with exotic life. Primitive lemurs swung through palm trees, while the first horse, *Eohippus*, a short-legged creature about the size of a fox terrier, nibbled on grass beside the squirrelish *Paramys*.

Now two scientists with the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh have rooted beneath the sediment of the Wind River valley to unearth a spectacular cache of fossils from the Eocene epoch, that critical time when many progenitors of modern mammals first appeared. Representing some 65 species and including about eight species previously unknown, the bones are the most diverse and perfectly preserved ever discovered from that time. Although they have only just begun to study their find, Richard Stucky, 34, and Leonard Krishtalka, 38, are already convinced that the bones will reveal precious clues to the evolution and extinction of ancient animals. Says Stucky exuberantly: "It's a gold mine."

Wyoming has been a favorite haunt of paleontologists for the past century, ever since westering pioneers reported that many vertebrate fossils were almost lying on the ground. Scientists soon discovered why. Roughly 55 million years ago, the Rockies rose violently, while enormous basins formed around Wyoming. Rains washed sediment into the natural bowls, and thousands of animal carcasses were buried and preserved.

Despite these promising conditions, scientists have rarely found more than a

few scattered specimens at a time. But almost as soon as Stucky and Krishtalka struck their pickaxes in the ground last June they unearthed a beautifully preserved Eocene skull and lower jaw of a



## Trapped in Time

"They look more alive than dead." So said Physical Anthropologist Owen Beattie last week of the three British sailors he and his colleagues at the University of Alberta had dug out from Arctic permafrost. Buried in 1846, the corpses are in flawless condition, down to the 19th century outfits and funeral head wrappings. The hands of one of the corpses, says Beattie, are long and delicate, like a pianist's. Petty Officer John Torrington, 20, left, Able Seaman John Hartnell, 25, and Royal Marine William Braine, 34, died after the two ships of Sir John Franklin's ill-fated expedition in search of the Northwest Passage were trapped by thick ice near Canada's remote Beechey Island. Over the next year, the 129 men on board struggled to survive, setting up a supply shop and smithy on the frozen tundra, but all eventually perished. Now that he has recovered three bodies, Beattie says, scientists can try to learn whether it was scurvy, toxins in the food or merely despair that killed the stranded crew.



La nave *Frontier Sprit* y un rompehielos, en la expedición de Sauvadet.  
MERS MAGNETIQUES

Sauvadet halla restos de la expedición de sir John Franklin en 1846

## Un explorador francés completa la vuelta al Ártico, sólo conseguida por Amundsen

OCTAVI MARTÍ, París  
Pierre Sauvadet es, junto a Roald Amundsen, el único explorador del Ártico que ha podido dar la vuelta completa a dicho océano. En 1991 reabrió el pasaje noreste siguiendo las costas siberianas hasta Japón a bordo de la nave *Astrolabe*. Este año, embarcado en el *Frontier Sprit*, ha completado el círculo por el noroeste llegando hasta Alaska.

En el primer viaje, el explorador francés compaginó aventura, investigación e intereses comerciales: "Cuando iniciamos el recorrido aún no sabíamos qué dirían las autoridades soviéticas. La

URSS existía e impuso ciertas limitaciones. Pudimos estudiar un poco cuestiones referidas a la deriva de los hielos, pero ciertas mediciones no nos fueron permitidas. Eso sí, demostramos que el

viaje era perfectamente factible, la intervención de los rompehielos fue mínima y acortamos el trayecto de manera extraordinaria, en varios miles de kilómetros y muchas semanas de navegación. Pero, de momento, es una ruta que no puede explotarse porque faltan puertos intermedios y porque las primas que hay que pagar a las compañías de seguros son altísimas".

La ruta siguiendo la costa canadiense, que comenzó en agosto y acaba de terminar, ha servido para descubrir otras cosas. "De entrada, que el Ártico de Canadá está mucho menos contaminado que el siberiano", cuenta Sauvadet. Los grandes ríos de la ex URSS están muy sucios. La costa rusa presenta una vida animal muy inferior a la de sus vecinos de enfrente".

"Además", añade, "hemos encontrado restos de la famosa expedición de sir John Franklin en 1846, un viaje emprendido con dos barcos y muchos medios, apoyado por la Corona británica, pero del que nada se supo desde 1847. La Armada británica realizó varias expediciones para averiguar qué había pasado. Cuarenta viajes partieron con este objetivo. Ahora nosotros hemos encontrado los restos, pero todavía queda el misterio de la expedición de sir John Franklin en su

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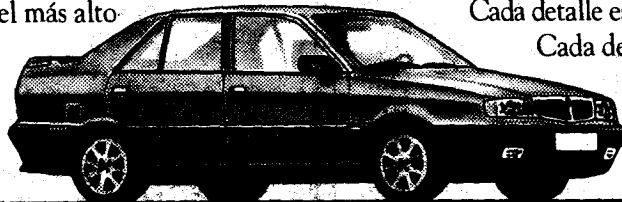
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Nunca y por último, en esta ha servido de ejemplo para demostrar que la instrumentación nueva de que disponemos es magnífica, que gracias a ella podremos abordar nuevas fases de la exploración del Ártico".

### Un satélite fascinante

La estrella de estos equipos es el satélite ERS-1. "Nos permite saber, en tiempo real, la importancia del oleaje, la velocidad e intensidad de las corrientes marinas, la deriva de los icebergs", detalla Sauvadet, que está fascinado con este satélite de la Agencia Europea del Espacio. "El ERS-1 da una vuelta a la Tierra cada 100 minutos. Nos proporciona así imágenes que corresponden a superficies de 10.000 kilómetros cuadrados. Para nosotros era especialmente útil para poder prever cualquier cambio brusco de la climatología y guiar mejor el *Frontier Sprit* a través de los hielos. Lo mismo que hace con el Polo Norte, lo hace con el Sáhara y nos muestra cómo el desierto se agranda o cómo en el Amazonas el ritmo de deforestación es más rápido del autorizado y del comunicado por las empresas que allí trabajan".

"La primera vez que acudí al Ártico fue cuando tenía 18 años", recuerda el explorador. "Fue un invierno con temperaturas de entre 10° y 30° centígrados bajo cero. Recorri la bahía de Hudson y lo que vi hizo que siempre haya querido regresar. Además, las autoridades canadienses han sabido conservar su país, son muy duras con los barcos o empresas que contaminan el medio ambiente. Sin embargo, a pesar del control también en el Ártico está apareciendo un agujero en la capa de ozono".





# Toda la lentitud

ABC CULTURAL  
18 - 8 - 2001



ALEJANDRO GÁNDARA

**A** HORA que llega el fin de la novela, como todos los veranos en que los periodistas necesitamos titulares para animar la nada, es la hora de recomendar una que demuestra lo lejos que quedan algunas defunciones. Edhasa acaba de reeditar, doce años después de su aparición en español, *El descubrimiento de la lentitud*, del alemán Sten Nadolny. Si usted piensa que la literatura es como un baño de sol, o sea, que sin protector da cáncer, no toque este libro o lea lo que todos sabemos. Pero si no le importa que sus sentimientos trabajen un poco antes de que se achicharren en las playas levantinas, corra a la librería de al lado. Pero corra.

Sólo se trata de una historia pequeña, de una vida pequeña y de un empeño grande. John Franklin, el marino que abrió a la navegación el paso del Noroeste, probando con el calendario y el deshielo, calculando y fracasando hasta que ya anciano no regresa del último viaje, es un hombre lento. Su infancia es la de un niño al que consideran retrasado y su manera de ver el mundo la de un ser que vive fuera de él. Le interesan los detalles, los episodios, no las cosmovisiones ni la Historia. No va deprisa, no toma grandes decisiones, pero al final, como la tortuga de Aquiles, será inalcanzable para el resto. Hay una forma de llegar lejos, quizá la forma superior, cuya estructura es la lentitud.

En nuestro mundo, y como bien sabemos, las cosas funcionan de otro modo. Somos conscientes de que la rapidez y la prisa no garantizan el resultado, pero se han convertido en signos de distinción y de prestigio social. El trabajo, el amor o la simple existencia son medidos en términos de la velocidad del tiempo. Un *broker* capaz de mover por el planeta cientos de millones en pocos segundos, un redactor escribiendo una noticia que acaban de pasarle a última hora o un intelectual opinando a diario están siendo contrastados por su rapidez. En las biografías americanas suele comentarse la edad a la que el prócer ganó su primer millón de dólares. Los jóvenes empiezan a hacer el amor y otras cosas a los 15 años, con la sensación de haberse perdido algo si lo retrasan. Y todos pensamos que el tiempo corre demasiado cuando nos quedamos quietos. En consecuencia, no soportamos los periodos muertos y el ocio lo aceptamos a condición de una incesante actividad o de su sustituto, el consumo. El dolor entra en el sistema general convertido en rémora, en pérdida y autodestrucción: forma seres convalecientes y temerosos, incapaces de enfrentarse o de crecer con él. Ante todo esto, no es de extrañar que una de las terapias de nuestra época sea el trabajo.

Sucede que en nuestra economía vital hemos adoptado la rapidez del dinero, que nos impide ver y esperar, y nos convierte en lo-

— Hoy empieza la campaña antártica —

# ESPAÑA EMPRENDE LA BÚSQUDA DE

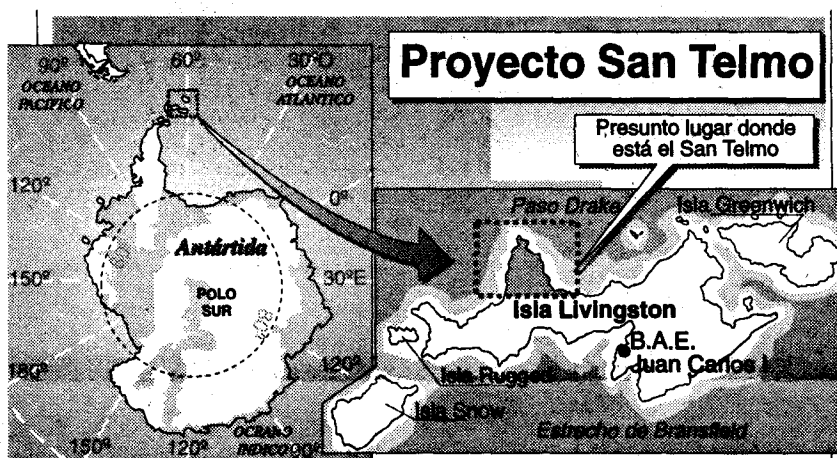
Madrid. **A. Aguirre de Cárcer**

**E**L proyecto, con un presupuesto de veinte millones de pesetas y tres años de duración, tiene por objetivo descubrir, localizar e identificar los vestigios del naufragio, así como recopilar datos sobre la estancia de los naufragos en Isla Livingston durante su corto periodo de supervivencia.

El San Telmo zarpó de Cádiz hacia Perú el 11 de mayo de 1819, con una tripulación de 644 marineros, bajo las órdenes del comandante Joaquín Toledo. Formaba parte de una flota compuesta por otro navío, el Alejandro, y dos fragatas, la Prueba y la Mariana, que partieron hacia Callao con un transporte de tropas que debía ayudar a los realistas en la pacificación de las colonias, ya en franca rebelión por el apoyo británico a la sublevación y el vacío de poder y control que provocó la guerra contra las tropas napoleónicas.

Pero el viaje fue un cúmulo de desgracias. Primero fue el Alejandro, que comenzó a hacer agua tras cruzar el Ecuador y tuvo que regresar. El infortunio atrapó más tarde al San Telmo. Al doblar el Cabo de Hornos,

El 2 de septiembre del año 1819, un violento temporal en Cabo de Hornos arrastró al navío español San Telmo hacia las remotas costas de la Antártida, donde se perdió entre las espesas brumas de una leyenda que aún perdura. Un grupo de científicos españoles, dirigidos por el catedrático de arqueología Manuel Martín-Bueno, afirma tener evidencias de que el barco, en el que viajaban 644 marineros, naufragó en Isla Livingston, lo que convertiría a los supervivientes en los verdaderos descubridores de la Terra Australis Incógnita. La búsqueda del San Telmo es uno de los más notables proyectos de la campaña científica española que hoy comienza en el continente helado



Prueba y la Mariana lograron llegar a Callao el 9 de octubre y fue entonces cuando se conoció la desgracia del San Telmo. Varios meses después, los 644 tripulantes de este navío fueron dados por desaparecidos.

¿Llegó algún superviviente a la Antártida? Martín-Bueno y sus colaboradores sospechan que es hoy día, el descubrimiento de este continente es atribuido al marino mercante británico William Smith que avistó en 1819 una tierra desconocida al cruzar el estrecho de Drake. Al llegar a Valparaíso, Smith anuncia su hallazgo y rápidamente se organiza una expedición, que poco más tarde verifica el descubrimiento. Los británicos desembarcaron en las Shetland del Sur, tomaron posesión de este archipiélago en nombre del rey Jorge de Inglaterra.

Sin embargo, en un viaje posterior, el marino William Smith escribió en su diario de navegación que había encontrado los restos de un navío de guerra, posiblemente español, en esas latitudes. Otro británico, James Weddell, confirmó el descubrimiento y afirma que puede tratarse de un barco español.

una violenta tempestad causó averías importantes en el navío. En medio del temporal, y con el timón, la verga mayor y el

tajamar prácticamente inutilizados, el San Telmo perdió definitivamente el contacto con las fragatas y nunca más volvió a ser visto. La

## Atrapados por lo inesperado

**E**NTRÉ los motivos de interés especial que tiene el proyecto San Telmo no es el menor el de permitir abrir de forma decidida un nuevo campo en la investigación antártica como es el de la arqueología, y más concretamente la arqueología subacuática. Hay razones lógicas para comprender que la investigación de tipo histórico no ha gozado nunca de un interés preferencial, ni siquiera normal, en el abanico de las ciencias que se ocupan habitualmente de la investigación en aquellos parajes, tan desolados e inhóspitos como subyugadores. El medio físico, la atmósfera y sus problemas, la climatología, la fauna, la geología, los recursos potenciales. Todos han llevado de la mano a los diversos equipos de estudiosos que pacientemente van desentrañando incógnitas y perfilando posibilidades.

Junto a esta investigación básica o aplicada, de singular importancia para nuestro futuro, tenemos la posibilidad de recopilación de los datos que nos permitan elaborar la verdadera historia del continente helado, no solo a través de crónicas e informaciones

Por aquellos que llegaron a ese territorio con afán de exploración o de explotación, de aventura o de saber, en busca de respuestas o para formular preguntas, o incluso por aquellos que sin pretenderlo fueron arrastrados por vientos y corrientes y terminaron sus días en medio de la soledad y el frío.

El San Telmo y sus naufragos pertenecen a este último grupo. Arrastrados por lo inesperado, llegaron seguramente a Isla Livingston para agotar sus días trágicamente. Es con ellos y sus restos, junto con todos los que vinieron luego, con los que tenemos una deuda pendiente, el estudio y ordenación de su historia y la reconstrucción arqueológica de su tránsito por aquellos lugares. El proyecto San Telmo, que aúna esfuerzos de científicos españoles y chilenos, pretende dar cumplida explicación a muchas de las incógnitas planteadas por aquella presencia. ¿Fueron los españoles los primeros en alcanzar el continente helado? ¿Intentaron desesperadamente huir de aquellos lugares sin

la teoría, determinar cuál fue la supervivencia de los naufragos y comprobar los restos de éste y otros navíos que naufragaron en zona.

El buque San Telmo, con sus 74 cañones y sus 644 hombres embarcados, habrá de ser el primer eslabón en la aplicación de una ciencia, la arqueología, con su metodología específica y con las técnicas más modernas de la investigación oceanográfica y geofísica en unos parajes que hasta ahora tan vedados, a excepción de una primera exploración de colegas chilenos en un campamento de cazadores de focas en la Isla Rey Jorge o por el reciente interés de algunos investigadores norteamericanos por recuperar una de sus primeras bases, construida a principios de los años cuarenta de este siglo. Es la arqueología, que como ciencia humanística nos permitirá recordar que tras todos los descubrimientos y gestas se esconden simples hombres con sus grandezas y miserias, **empezará a leer el diario de la Antártida escrito en sus muros y en su**

# SAN TELMO EN AGUAS DE LA ANTÁRTIDA

ñol. Así nació la leyenda del «navío negro», novelada en el siglo XIX por Antonio de San Martín y más tarde recogida por Pío Baroja en «Siluetas Románticas».

Hace ya nueve años, un grupo de investigadores españoles comenzó una investigación a fondo para confirmar si los restos avistados por los ingleses corresponden al San Telmo. En busca de las primeras pruebas, los arqueólogos bucearon en numerosos fondos documentales españoles y británicos, desde el Archivo General de la Armada Española, el Museo Naval, el British Museum al Scott Polar Institute, entre otros. Mapas, derroteros, cartas,... todo un gran volumen de escritos fueron analizados con detalle en busca de alguna pista. Hoy, los investigadores españoles están totalmente convencidos de que el San Telmo, arrastrado por la violencia del mar, fue a parar a Isla Livingston. Incluso afirman que algunos naufragos sobrevivieron en aquella isla, hasta que el frío y el hambre acabó con sus vidas durante su primer invierno antártico.

Dos científicos españoles se trasladaron a principios de este año a la Antártida para realizar una exploración preliminar en las playas de Punta Shirreff, de Isla Livingston, donde se cree que quedó hundido el San Telmo. «Por el momento— señaló el profesor Martín-Bueno a ABC Cultural— los análisis de las primeras

*Los más de seicientos marineros españoles embarcados en el navío pudieron ser los primeros en descubrir la Terra Australis Incógnita en 1819*

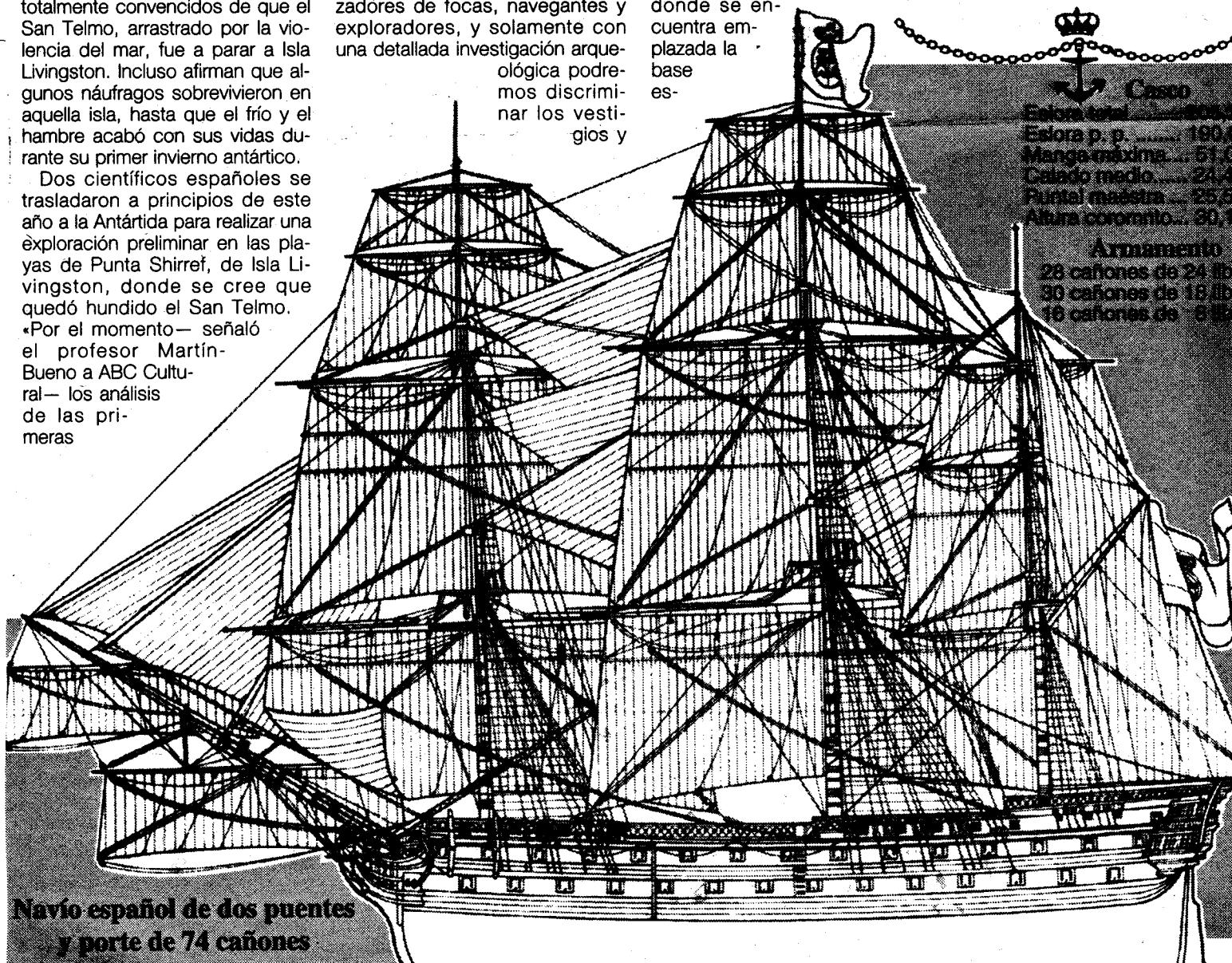
maderas recuperadas en la campaña preliminar de 1993, permiten identificar especies vegetales norteamericanas, como pino de Oregon, Picea sp, Red pine y Cupressaceae. También se localizaron en un acantilado unas oquedades, presumiblemente artificiales, posibles refugios antiguos, así como unas acumulaciones de huesos de focas, vestigios de animales sacrificados seguramente como alimento». No obstante, Martín-Bueno puntualiza que «aquella zona es muy frecuentada por cazadores de focas, navegantes y exploradores, y solamente con una detallada investigación arqueológica podremos discriminar los vestigios y

proceder a atribuciones fiables».

«El análisis de la alteración antártica en la zona, así como un programa de estudio de tratamientos de madera a presión atmosférica en clima frío, complementarán las investigaciones previstas» en esta campaña, según el científico español. En los estudios, que constituyen el primer proyecto arqueológico y subacuático de la Antártida, se combinarán los trabajos en tierra con una serie de inmersiones en las gélidas aguas de Isla Livingston, donde se encuentra emplazada la base es-

pañola Juan Carlos I. Todos los trabajos se realizarán con un método instrumental arqueológico geofísico, nunca aplicado hasta ahora en el continente antártico.

La mayor garantía de éxito, dice, no obstante, en la calidad de los investigadores españoles, la Universidad de Zaragoza y el Instituto Español de Oceanografía, las dos instituciones que soportan el mayor peso del proyecto. En total participarán ocho científicos españoles que contarán con la colaboración de tres chilenos, miembros del Instituto Nacional Antártico Chileno y del Museo Nacional de Antropología. Entre los expertos españoles figuran arqueólogos, geofísicos, geólogos marinos y especialistas en buceo y navegación submarina.



Navío español de dos puentes y porte de 74 cañones

Casco	
Estora total	190
Estora p. p.	190
Manga máxima	51
Calado medio	24
Puntal máximo	25
Altura coronamiento	20
Armamento	
28 cañones de 24 lb	
30 cañones de 18 lb	
16 cañones de 9 lb	

FUNDADO EN 1905 POR DON TORCUATO LUCA DE TENA

PRONTO hará seis siglos que la muy fiel, noble y real ciudad de Betanzos, celebra las fiestas de San Roque.

Con su palitroque el santo de la palingenesia a la ciudad salvó de epidemias... y corrupciones.

En 1416 por vez primera los betanceiros comprendieron la importancia de este espiritual salvamento. Salvaje y sin salvos el día llegaría en que la putrefacción amenazaría con gangrenar nuestra propia substancia.

Como quinientos setenta y nueve años han pasado ya, podemos atrevernos a descifrar hoy el significado y la signatura de la fiesta. Gracias a la simbólica protección de San Roque betanceiros y betlemitas contra las epidemias ayer se inmunizaron como se invulnerabilizan hoy contra la moderna peste de la corrupción.

Cada año Betanzos eleva al cielo el mayor globo de papel del mundo como apoteosis alegórico. ¡Alegre y aleccionador alegató en tiempos de gusarapienta pudrición! ¡Aleluya!

El lanzamiento de este aereostático ingenio es metafísica metáfora de espiritual ascensión. Los lanzadores de globos betanceiros representan al quijote icástico iconoclasta y al ético y hélico poeta heterodoxo con ramos de anarquista divino capaz de alzarse por encima de misántropos humores y humanas miserias.

El globo, liberándonos de cotidianas corrupciones, elévase como arrabalesco arrebató, para alcanzar arreboles y firmamentos de poesía, ciencia, libertad y amor.

Los prístinos «globeiros» de Betanzos de los Caballeros, vivieron la prodigiosa aventura de la primera vez.

Primer globo nacido como chascarrillo del destino cual chiste de la fatalidad. Y es que a menudo hadas y hado, disfrazándose de buena estrella, estremecedora y enternecedoramente a extravagantes inventores se rinden.

El primer globo, como juguete de ciencia infusa, inflado de infinito, se izó desde un fogón de cocina hasta el techo de la habitación. Por mor de intelectual especulación que no por arte de magia. Creía el paridor del ingenio, preñado de fantasía, que humos y nubes efluvios eran de la misma efímera y efervescente naturaleza. En su cocina el inventor encerró humo en una esfera de papel para auparla como nube del cielo. Cuando fascinado contempló la ascensión de su artesano artificio de artista sin arteria dio por descubrimiento científico lo que era nada menos que hipótesis poética.

## EL ANHELO DE SUBIR AL CIELO

contenido aire del recipiente impulsando su irresistible ascensión. El calor, como símbolo de fervor, suplantaba a las fumarolas de infernal ciencia fumigadas por calderas de Pedro Botero.

Para el inicial vuelo con seres vivos el inventor eligió como primeros pasajeros sin pasaporte a tres alegóricos animales: pato, gallo y borrego. Ante la estupefacción de la multitud de espectadores esparrancados y boquiabiertos los tres pioneros animalitos tras un vuelo de ocho minutos, a más de mil quinientos pies de altura, volvieron a tierra y corral sanos y salvos. Aunque el gallo galarro recibió una coz del borrego borrero durante el aterrizaje que le fracturó una de sus alas.

El pato de aquella primera exploración era símbolo de fidelidad; el gallo imagen solar, heliaca, de quien canta cuando sale el sol; y el borrego, como figura central del toisón de oro, representaba la alquimista sabiduría.

Pronto se especuló con la especie (especiota para escépticos) de que incluso un ser humano podría volar. Entusiasta el rey ofreció un criminal condenado a muerte para afrontar tan peligrosa experiencia. Prisionero que hubiera sido indultado y endulzado si hubiera vuelto a tierra tras tan temeraria aventura. Varios centenares de encarcelados se propusieron como voluntarios volantes de la odisea en volandas. Pero el historiador de la corte, movido por su anhelo de conquistar gloria y fama, se adelantó a los famélicos de fortalezas y penales. Por vez primera un hombre voló durante venticinco minutos a una altura de quinientos pies por encima de una muchedumbre pasmada o pasmarote.

El globo inspiró insólitas insolencias e hipótesis hiperbólicas. El profesor británico Joseph Back demostró empíricamente que

una vaca inflada de hidrógeno por el culo planearía en el firmamento tan sencillamente como años más tarde lo harían los enamorados de Chagall en sus cuadros.

Muchas fueron las víctimas de la ambición de «volar en globo», del ansia simbólica de «subir al cielo». El explotado protomártir Rozier pereció al explotar sobre el Canal de la Mancha el hidrógeno de su balón. El sueco Salomón André, ventidos años después del lanzamiento del primer globo betanceiro, acometió la ardiente empresa del sobrevolar el Polo Norte con dos amigos. El ingenio aereostático se llamó «Águila», animal capaz de mirar al sol y símbolo potable de potencia. Días después del despegue un esquimal cazó una paloma mensajera que en su pata llevaba este recatado recado: «Todo va bien a bordo». Hubieron de pasar treinta y tres años para tener nuevas de la expedición. La tripulación de un navío polar noruego halló los restos de los heroicos «globeiros» suecos abrazados eternamente por un glaciar. En 1927 el capitán Cray batió el record de altura sin altanería. En el barógrafo del ingenio quedó registrado el dato: 42.470 pies. En el suelo de la góndola del globo convertida en ataúd se halló el cadáver del capitán sin caperuza; en sus caprichos capitaneantes no soñó con mejor muerte.

Los betanceiros siguen elevando globos años tras año, aplicando más de dos milenios después de Arquímedes su principio y sus conclusiones. Una vez en el aire el ingenio betanceiro se mueve a merced del viento, sin que nadie pueda presagiar su destino destilado por la providencia. Y sin embargo todos los años el globo pasa por encima del cementerio como para saludar a esos andantes caballeros que hicieron Betanzos de los Caballeros.

El final de este recordatorio ya sólo es referible en parábola puesto que sucede fuera del tiempo.

Dispersos por el mundo o reclusos entre las cinco puertas de la muy fiel, noble y real ciudad de Betanzos, todos somos los mismos. Los de antes y los de ahora, y los que han de venir. Locos y sabios, insensatos o héroes, peotas, inventores o caballeros andantes. No hemos venido a esta tierra para vivir mejor o peor. Tratamos de ascender en globo betanceiro al firmamento de la espiritualidad. Cuando el mundo, desmoralizado por la corrupción, parece perderse, betanceiros, quijotes y «globeiros» pronun-



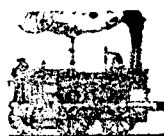
ABC digame?

Para su pequeño anuncio llámenos 4615353

ABC pone a

PARTE GRÁFICA

Imágenes de "La Aeronave" de fin de siglo



velles rusos, los designados con número impares: 1, 3 y 5. No sufrieron ningún "inconveniente" en su trayectoria, ni siquiera el "Sputnik III" el 15 de mayo de 1960, con 968 kg. de instrumentos delicados. En cambio, de los cuatro tuvieron encuentros con OVNIS y el sexto, no se recuerda...

ALBO!, N° 139,  
LOS «CURIOSOS» VUELVEN  
AL ATAQUE... 1969

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 desplazan 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 no identificados en el espacio pesó en los ánimos del Pentágono hasta el punto de intentar a crear el «Proyecto Santos» 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 reservorio 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 da precisión con que todo lo referente a nuestra técnica astronáutica 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 dice 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 series de fotografías —fuera de toda duda— de estos «intrusos», que fueron publicadas por la NASA.

Una de éstas fue obtenida por Borrmann y Lovell el 4 de diciembre de 1965, desde el «Céminis VII», sobre dos extraños cuerpos que súbitamente aparecieron dentro de su campo de visibilidad.

Los técnicos, desde tierra, pusieron que se trataba del cohete impulsor. Suposición a la que Borrmann respondió inmediatamente: «Sabemos dónde se encuentra el proyectil impulsor. Esto es una aparición verdadera...».

Por supuesto que con aquellas palabras se refería a algo que no le era imponible identificar.

Los dos astronautas observaron asimismo en la lejanía multitud de extrañas luces que se movían en ángulos rectos. Y esto nos recuerda las «luciferinas» o luminosos corpúsculos, verdaderos que ya habrían sido observados en febrero de 1962 por John Glenn.

Versión de Tabera, sobre el insólito encuentro que tuvo Jim Heaton, en abril de 1967, en Arkansas (Estados Unidos).

## LAS POLITICAS DEL «TOP SECRET»

Otro par de interesantes secuencias fotográficas fueron obtenidas por Mc Divitt, que volaba en compañía de White a bordo del «Céminis IV», el 11 de junio de 1965, sobre un cuerpo no identificado sobre una especie de proyecciones como brujas, que se desplazaba a la altura de las islas Hawaii. Minutos después, a unos 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 inmediatamente 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 como fenómeno digno de estudio; atendiendo a la recomendación hecha por el «Panel Robertson» —simple marioneta movida por los interesados dados de la Agencia Central de Inteligencia (CIA)— al «Project Blue Book» 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 Colorado», 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 creyentes».

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 1960, 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 Sauciers y Levine habían descubierto un método para confundir a los miembros que especificaban a los directores que registrar el Proyecto, y lo habían facilitado, para su publicación, al doctor McDonald, gran luchador por la causa de los OVNIS.

«¡UFO? ¡YES! (OVNI? ¡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 «esquivocación»— lanzaron su desafío al Informe de Condon.

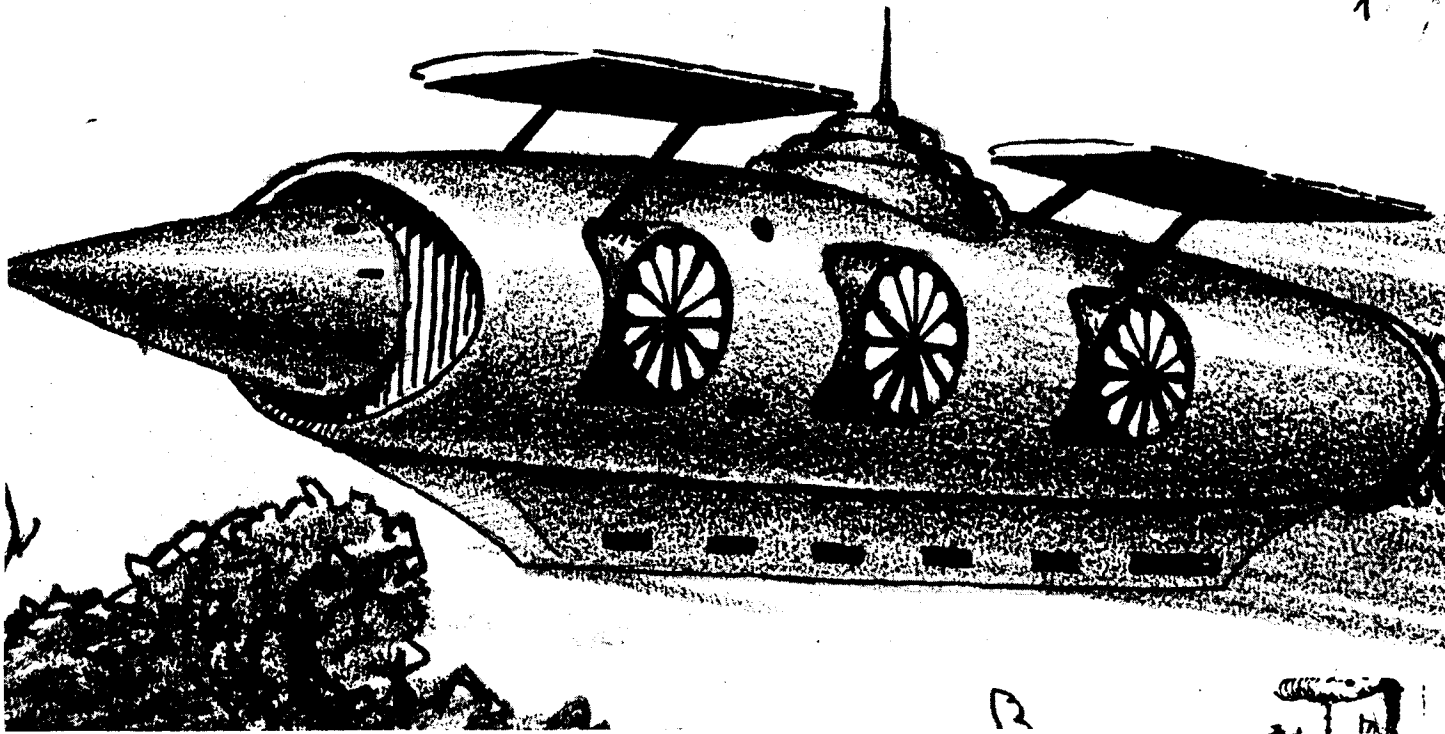
...

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, pensemos con Plinio que «no hay nada increíble en la naturaleza; algunos esperando e investigando: el enigma se resolverá».

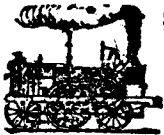
ENRIQUE VICENTE

(Dibujos de F. Tabera.)





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

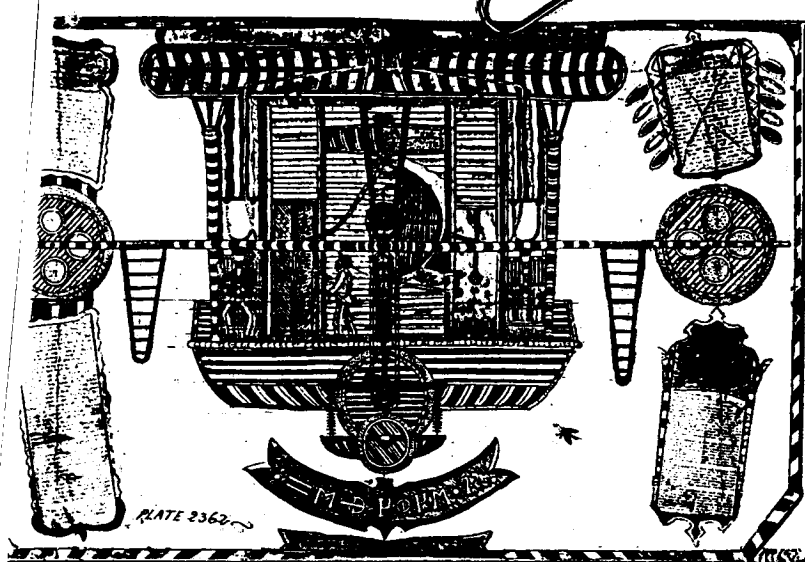
account was "a well studied one" and "ingeniously wrought," the reporter quoted the Judge as follows:

"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.



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."

... was lying. Sometimes it was "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:** Armhands 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.

Recent Arrivals, continued:

UFO RESEARCH items, continued.

- by, Robert G. UFOs OF 1896/1897: THE AIRSHIP WAVE. No date, spiral bound, 4pp. Another wonderful historical item, by far the best journalistic his-ports known or considered to be hoaxes, reports considered to be mistaken ob-rvations of astronomical objects, and reports which are considered to have "real." The only truly serious attempt to deal with this century-old ic attitudes of the age. Somewhat difficult to read because of dot-matrix nt--but persevere, and ye shall be rewarded! \$50.00
- THE AIRSHIP CHRONICLE. No date, 26 1/2pp, spiral bound. Case synopses of ship sightings from August, 1896 through May 7, 1897, with the great major- dream from the April 1897 period. Marvelous item for Forteaners, UFO re-searchers and students of "man-made" UFOs. \$40.00
- liner, Don. THE BLUE BOOK UNKNOWN. No date, 65pp, stapled. Case catalogue of 585 Project Blue Book "unidentified..." About 80% contain the original riting matter, which were later collected and were therefore unavailable. \$13.00
- FBI-UFO CONNECTION. No date. Vols 1-3, over 600pp loose-leaf plastic wrap. From FBI files, these were released in 1976, pursuant to a request under the Freedom of Information Act by Bruce Maccabee. Goldmine of U.S. government data relevant to cases and personalities. \$80.00
- erfield, Keith, and Vladimir Godic, eds. MANDRABILLA, AUSTRALIA--20th-JAN-uary 1968 INVESTIGATION REPORT. 1968, 70pp, stapled. This was the incident which featured an auto being lifted off the ground and then dropped back to it, and the discovery of some strange dust on the vehicle. Here is the UFO search Australia investigation. \$14.00
- ler, Louis. CATALOG OF UFO-LIDER DATA BEFORE 1947. No date, 84pp, consists of Parts 1 and 2. Great item for proto-ufoologists. \$75.00
- MALL'S STANWARD DICTIONARY OF FOLKLORE, MYTHOLOGY AND LEGEND. Harpen, '84, softbound, 1234pp. Had to look up "Nephale" yesterday. Looked all over my ancient histories and folklore texts, but found it only here. A must! \$34.95
- lie. THE MAGNIFICENT NUMBERS OF THE GREAT PYRAMID AND STONEHENGE. The author, ml. soft, 201pp, 2nd prtg. Dimensions, measures & correlations. \$6.95
- Tony. STEALTH B-2 BOMBER: TEN AMERICAN-MADE UFO. The author, 90, 8 1/2 x 11, revised, by all means, see our previous write-ups for this fascinating work, probably have "60 Minutes" knocking at Goncalves' door real soon! \$20.00
- ly, ed. THE UFO REPORT 1990. Sidgwick & Jackson, '89. HC, 223pp, it's in which has, among other goodies, 40 pages on the British "crop circles." We have been sent, and we still have a supply of this anthology of current his Mind, Paul Norman, Ralph Hayes (on UFO landing), etc. \$24.95
- E. UFOs: A HISTORY. The first 4 volumes of this great contribution to ours are available as follows:
  - 1. 1947. 53pp + index, \$8.95
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  - 3. January-June, 1949. 86pp text + index, \$8.95
  - 4. July-December, 1949. 79pp text, + index, \$8.95
- llam. THE CENTER OF THE VORTEX. Talos, '86. 8 1/2 x 11, spiral bound, 86pp. slated work, with physical analyses being related to spiritual ones. \$15



# IUR

*International UFO Reporter*

*January/February 1991  
Volume 16, Number 1*

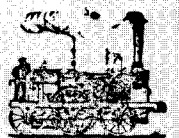
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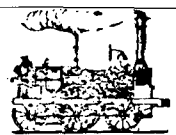
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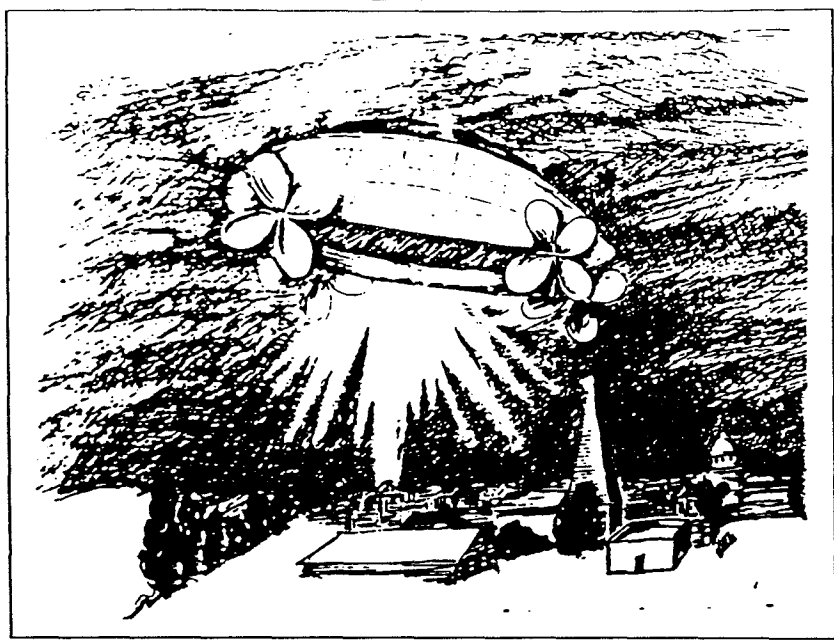


**Airships—the mystery solved**





rious, and apparently  
 ics would serve as a small  
 much greater epic to come,  
 ld occupy newspapers all  
 ted States for six months  
 umber 1896 and April 1897.  
 mplify the many problems  
 earcher faces in trying to  
 of early press accounts of  
 ents. The alleged witnesses  
 d, and there is no way to  
 eir sincerity or the accuracy  
 mony. We do not even know  
 es if the tales are anything  
 urnalistic inventions.  
 uropean reports seem to have  
 ibility (if nothing to do with  
 wn of the aviation or weapons  
 of the period), the New  
 port is absurd on its face.  
 the sort described in the  
 account were not flying, or  
 fly, in the America of the late  
 ry, or even of the early 20th  
 81; Lore and Deneault, 1968). Air traffic  
 hina and the United States was a technological  
 ity. To all appearances the story is someone's  
 ke; if so, however, it would be a joke often  
 the years ahead.  
 merican publication of Jules Verne's popular  
*Conqueror*, a sort of airborne version of his  
*entury Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870)  
 marvelous airship takes the place of Capt.  
 ondrous submarine, was seven years away  
 Galisteo Junction story saw print, but by 1880  
 no shortage of popular speculation about  
 an-air flight, which figured prominently in  
 ctional adventure tales (Miller, 1987; Moskow-  
 . In 1862 aviation enthusiasts in France formed  
 to promote research and experiments in this  
 the following year Verne became its recording  
 In the United States inventors published  
 or rigid dirigibles and powered aircraft, but what  
 re were consisted of little more than short hops.  
 for example, Frederick Marriott of California  
 to keep a winged, steam-powered dirigible aloft  
 ile. In 1872 German engineer Paul Haenlein  
 ur-cylinder internal-combustion engine (which  
 al gas from a supporting bag) to power a semi-  
 ne dirigible. The following year the *New York*  
*aphic* sponsored an attempt to send a 400,000-  
 ot balloon, with attached lifeboat, across the  
 Ocean, but the bag tore open as it was being  
 On November 13, 1897, the first metal dirigible  
 n successfully from Berlin, but leaking gas  
 t to crash after several miles in flight. No history  
 on 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).

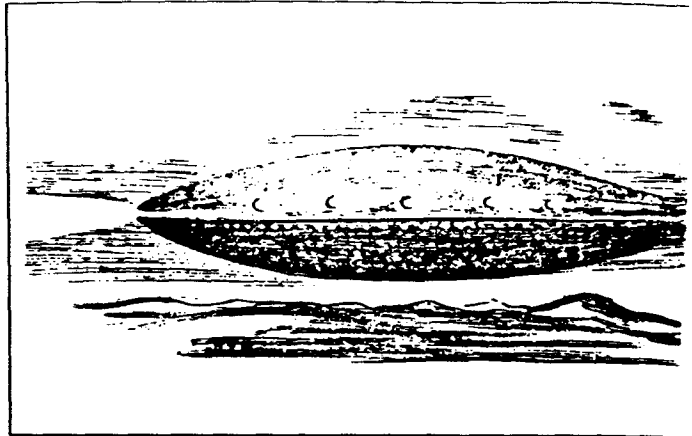
In the summer of 1896 a man looking out the door of  
 a mail car on a train moving through Iowa saw a strange  
 sight. He reported the incident to the *Monthly Weather*  
*Review*:

"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).

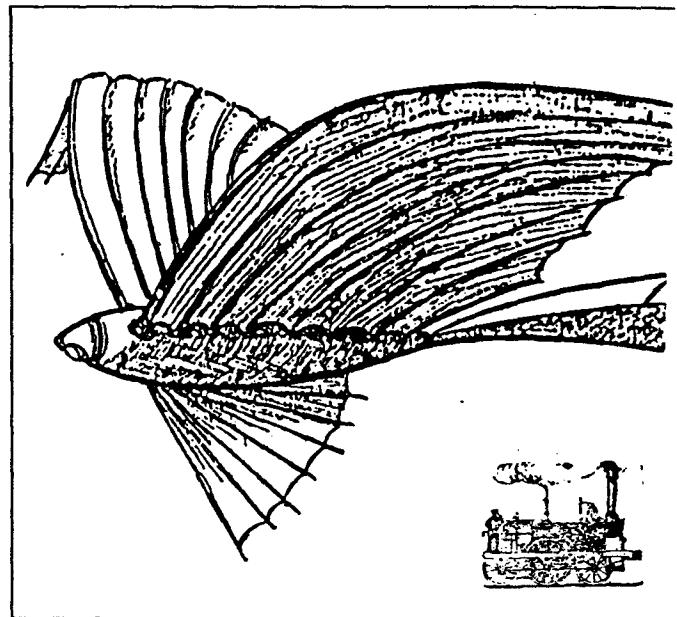
If this sighting had occurred a few months later—  
 and in fact many similar sightings would be made from  
 moving trains—the observer would probably have  
 reported that he had seen the light of an airship.

... 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 shot down at an angle toward the earth." At intervals it swung from side to side as if searching for homes below. I sat in my balcony, too terrified to move. I realized that the object was very low, for it filled my view and seemed just about to be hitting our two-story house as it passed overhead (Howell, 1958). Queens, New York, summer 1944: While riding our bikes on a footpath adjacent to the Long Beach Parkway ... in a wooded section. As we went up a hill, we looked up and saw a cigar-shaped object broadside to us. ... [I]t was longer and more like a blimp; it was of smooth metal construction with windows or openings in sight. It didn't show its underside as normal dirigibles and blimps do (Howell, 1961). Lafayette, New York, spring 1944: In an open convertible, two men noticed a cigar-shaped object in the sky. It turned out to be from the sun reflecting off a nearby hill.



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 discard the idea altogether.

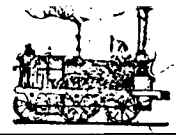
As for the areas of expertise, physicists may be shocked to learn they have been nominated as the group most concerned with crop-circle research (perhaps atmospheric physics is what the respondents had in mind). Agriculturalists concede that they, too, should be involved, and it would have been surprising had they not. Other fields of expertise suggested for crop-circle research ranged from history to geology (?),

and astronomers may be as embarrassed as botanists for their input into the important piece of information obtained. The most interesting question is that crop circles seem to be a rare phenomenon.

Should scientists study crop circles? Respondents replied in the negative, and this, considering the ridicule that has been cast upon them with regard to anomalous phenomena. Their research probably would not look good in the long run, especially when one is applying for a grant. Nonetheless three respondents suggested they were 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. They wanted to know only how the hoaxers had created the circles. Several indicated that scientific investigations would come out of an investigation. Of those who thought a formal investigation was in order, most thought crop-circle research a waste of time, but it is likely due to a perception that the circles are hoaxes. The need to catch circle hoax perpetrators is a high priority, and the possibility that the circles are something out of the ordinary was not considered. Most respondents acknowledged they had not investigated them personally. There was no consensus on whether they should lead a formal investigation: some thought university researchers, or ufologists.

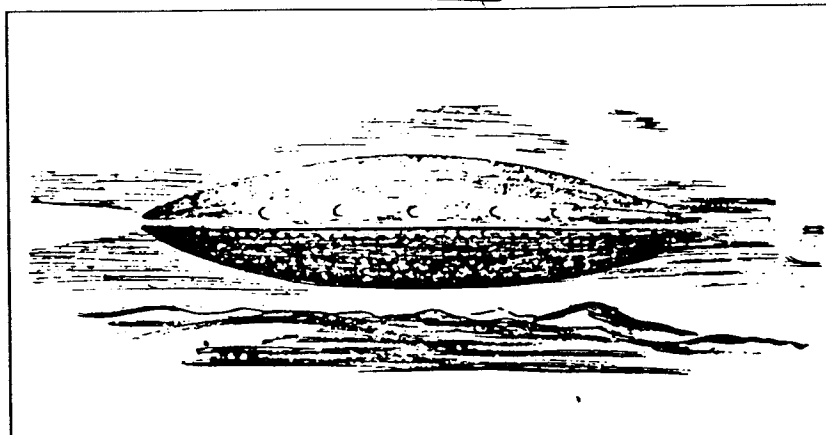
The miscellaneous comments offered in response to the survey form showed a wide range of opinions.



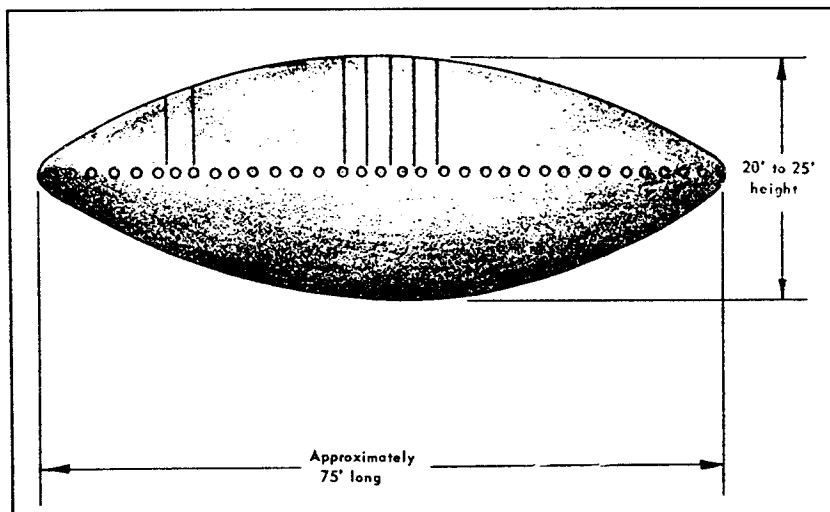
On August 25, 1952, around 6 a.m., a Pittsburg, Kansas, musician named William Squyres was driving to work at a local radio station when, according to the Air Force account, "he noted the unknown object off to the right side of the road at a horizontal angle of about 40 degrees and at a distance of about 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*

# THE MUFON UFO JOURNAL

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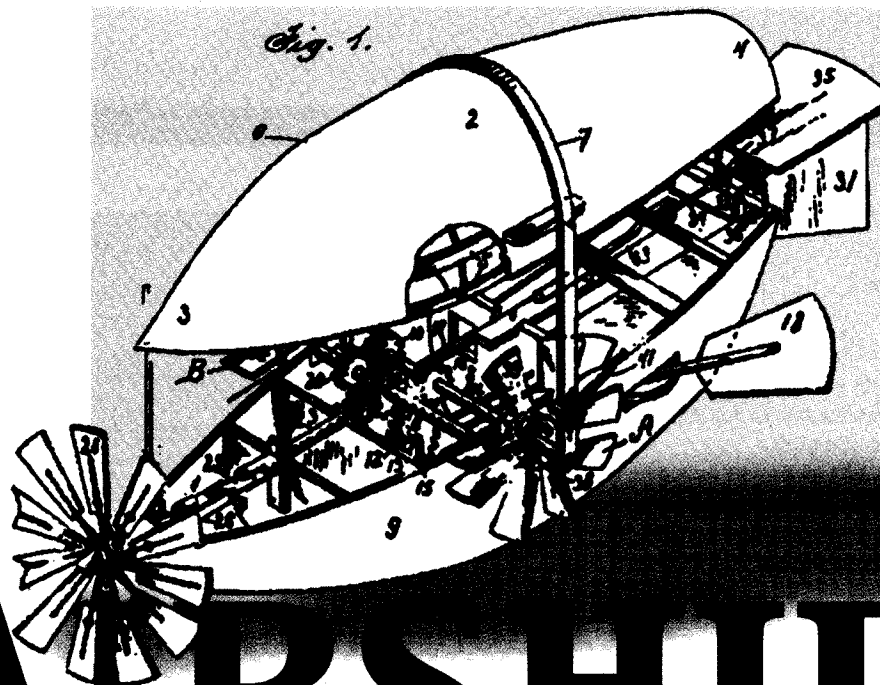
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF



MUTUAL UFO NETWORK, INC.

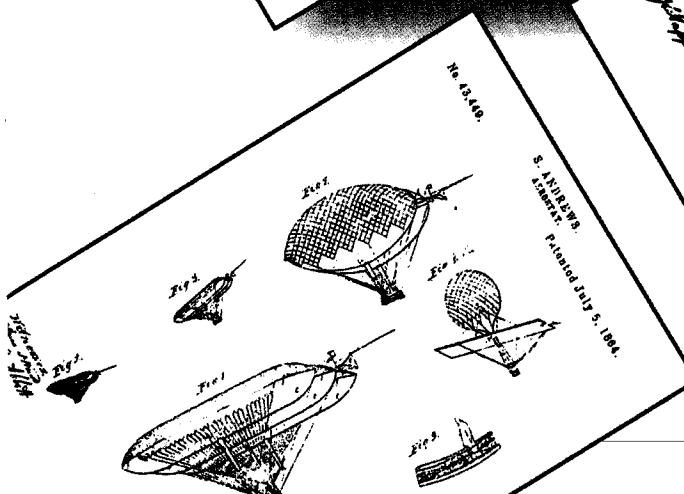
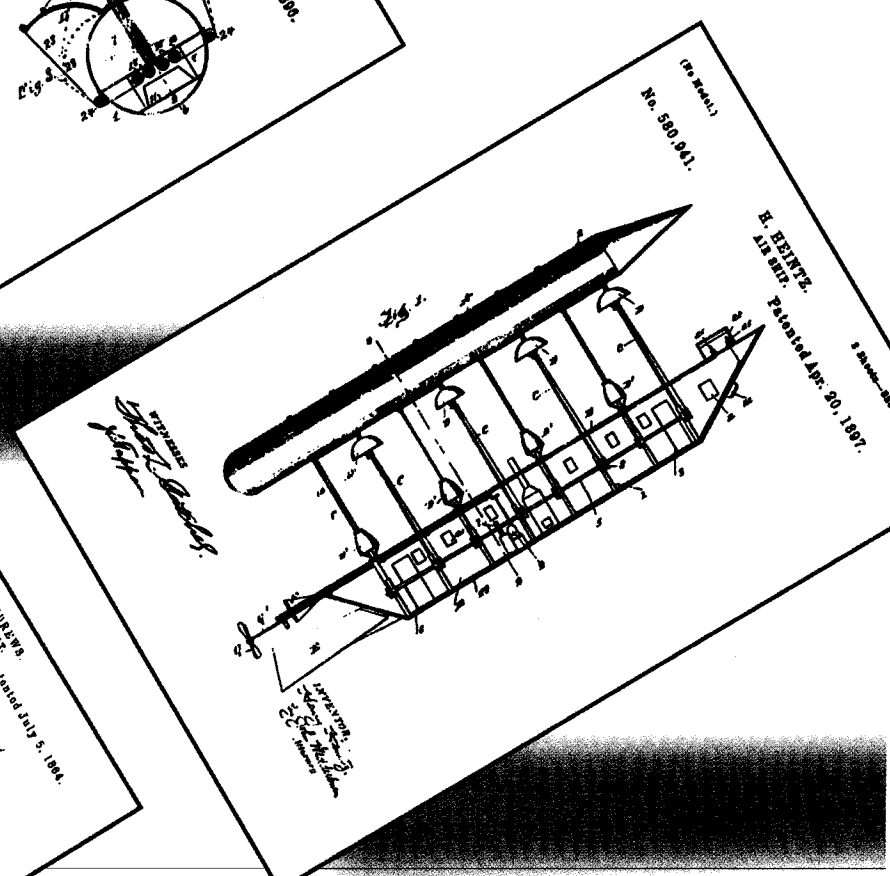
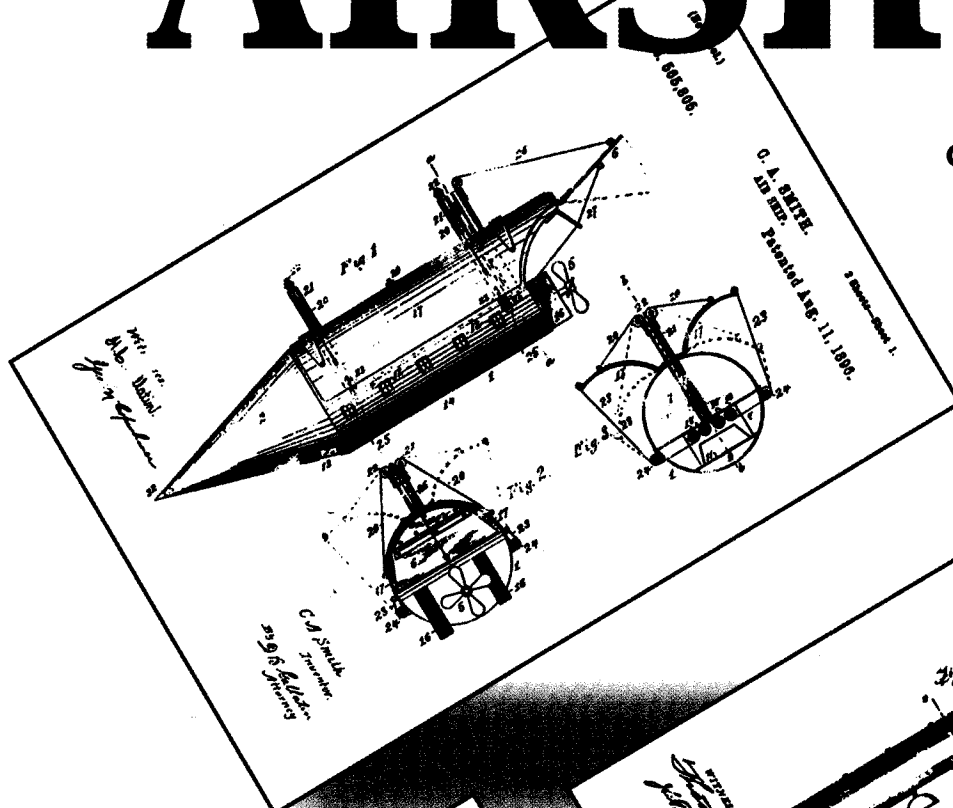


LATE 1896 ENGRAVING FROM SAN FRANCISCO CALL



# AIRSHIPS

Una investigación desvela el enigma de los OVNIs de 1897



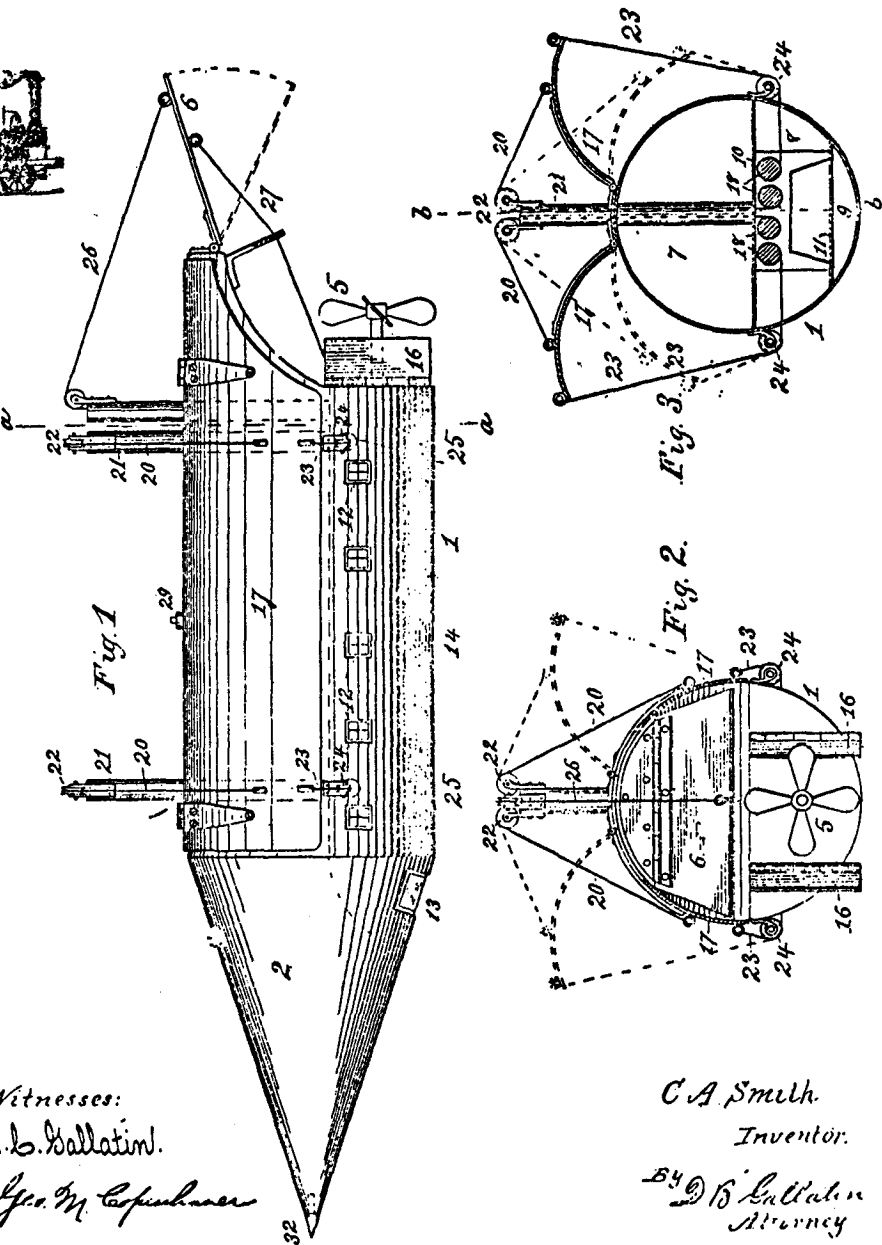
(No Model.)

C. A. SMITH.  
AIR SHIP.

2 SHEETS—SHEET 1.

No. 565,805.

Patented Aug. 11, 1896.



Witnesses:  
H. B. Sallatin.  
Geo. M. Cushman

C. A. Smith.  
Inventor.  
By D. B. Sallatin  
Attorney

Reproduction of an airship patent granted C. A. Smith of San Francisco, California, on August 11, 1896. (Courtesy of the U.S. Patent

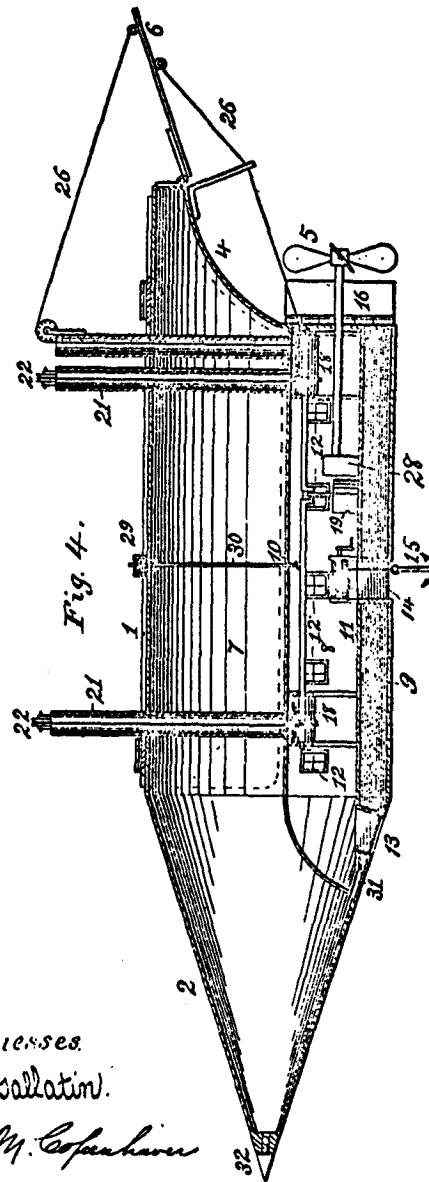
(No Model.)

C. A. SMITH.  
AIR SHIP.

2 Sheets—Sheet 2.

No. 565,805.

Patented Aug. 11, 1896.



Witnesses:  
H. B. Sallatin.  
Geo. M. Cushman

C. A. Smith.  
Inventor.  
By D. B. Sallatin  
Attorney

57



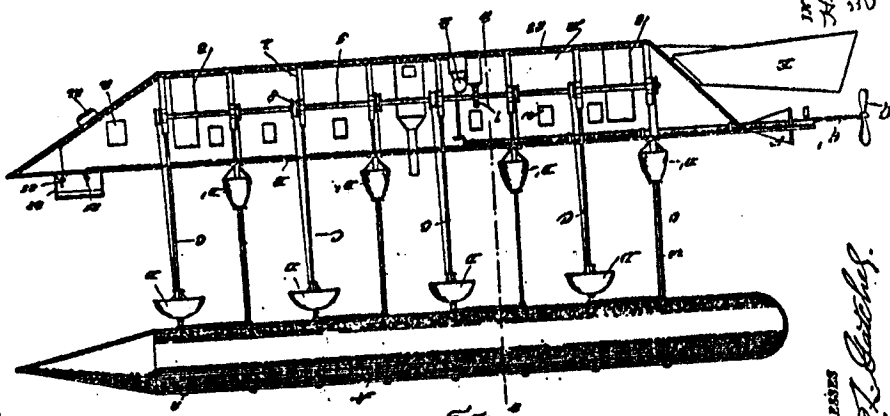
(No Model)

H. HEINTZ,  
AIR SHIP.

No. 580,941.

3 Sheets—Sheet 1.

Patented Apr. 20, 1897.



WITNESSES  
Theodore S. Smith  
John H. ...

ATTORNEY  
Henry ...  
J. H. ...



Recent Arrivals, continued:  
UFO RESEARCH items, continued.

1. **THE AIRSHIP CHRONICLE.** No date, 263p, spiral bound. Case synopses of airship sightings from August, 1896 through May 7, 1897, with the great majority drawn from the April 1897 period. Marvelous item for Portlans, UFO researchers and students of "man-made" UFOs. \$40.00

2. **THE BLUE BOOK UNMANS.** No date, 65pp, stapled. Case catalogue of 585 Project Blue Book "unmanned" objects. About 60% contain the original "unmanned" microfilm or other material and were therefore unavailable. \$13.00

3. **THE FBI-UFO CONNECTION.** No date. Vols 1-3, over 600pp loose-leaf plastic-wrap format. FBI files, these were released in 1976, pursuant to a request under the Freedom of Information Act by Bruce Maccubbin. Goldmine of U.S. government data relevant to cases and personalities. \$80.00

4. **BATERFIELD, Keith, and Vladimir Godic, eds. MARRAMILLA, AUSTRALIA, 20th-JANUARY 1968 INVESTIGATION REPORT.** 1988, 70pp, stapled. This was the incident which featured an auto being lifted off the ground and then dropped back to it, and the discovery of some strange dust on the vehicle. Here is the UFO Research Australia investigation. \$14.00

5. **Minkler, Louis. CATALOG OF UFO-LIKE DATA REFUGEES 1947.** No date, 84pp, consists of Parts 1 and 2. Great item for UFO-enthusiasts. \$18.00

6. **"PINK & MORGAN'S SYNOPSIS DICTIONARY OF FOLKLORE, MYTHOLOGY AND LEGEND.** Harpess, '84, 8 1/2 x 11 softcover, 1726pp. Had to look up "megabale" yesterday. Looked all over my books, ancient histories and folklore texts, but found it only here. A must! \$34.95

7. **Grant, Bonnie. THE MAGNETIC NUMBERS OF THE GREAT PYRAMID AND STURGEON.** The author, 1984. Qal. soft, 201pp, 2nd prtg. Dimensions, measures & correlations. \$4.95

8. **Connelley, Tony. STERILITY IN-2 HOMES: TEN AMERICAN-MADE UFO.** The author, 1978, 112pp, revised, by all means, see our previous write-ups for this fascinating work, which will probably have "60 Minutes" knocking at Connelley's door real soon! \$20.00

9. **Good, Timothy, ed. THE UFO REPORT 1990.** Sidgwick & Jackson, '89. HC, 223pp, 11 1/2 x 8 1/2, back covers have been sent, and we still have a supply of this anthology of current research, which has, among other goodies, 40 pages on the British "crop circles." Also, Cynthia Hind, Paul Norman, Ralph Boyes (on UFO "sighting"), etc. \$41.95

10. **Greco, Loren E. UFOs: A HISTORY.** The first 4 volumes of this great contribution to UFO literature are available as follows:  
A. Vol 1: 1947. 100pp text, 1 index, \$9.95  
B. Vol 2: January-June, 1949. 86pp text, 1 index, \$8.95  
C. Vol 3: July-December, 1949. 79pp text, 1 index, \$8.95  
D. Vol 4: July-December, 1949. 79pp text, 1 index, \$8.95

11. **Wallton, William. THE CENTER OF THE VORTEX.** Telos, '66. 8 1/2 x 11, spiral bound, 86pp. An energy-related work, with physical energies being related to spiritual ones. \$15

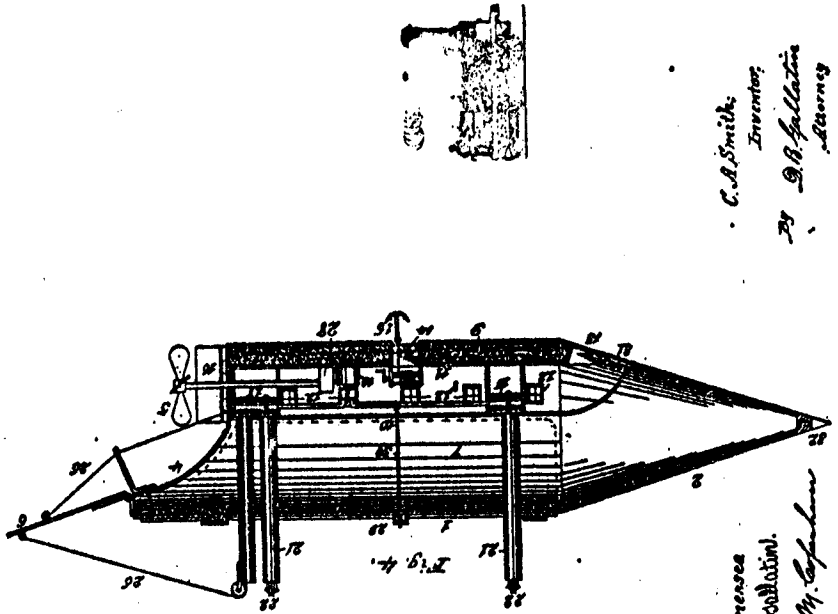
(No Model)

C. A. SMITH,  
AIR SHIP.

No. 605,805.

Patented Aug. 11, 1906.

3 Sheets—Sheet 2.



Witnesses  
 A. B. Robinson,  
 Geo. M. Caplan

C. A. Smith,  
 Inventor,  
 By D. B. Spiller,  
 Attorney

U  
 4

Page 3, 1990-5... Recent Arrivals, continued:  
 60. FUND FOR UFO RESEARCH Items, continued.

- J. Nealey, Robert C. UFOs of 1896/1897: THE AIRSHIP WAVE. No date, spiral bound, 24pp, another wonderful historical item, by far the best journalistic history of the 1896/7 U.S. airship wave, with added sections at end which evaluate the wave in terms of its significance to be mistaken observations of aerostatic objects, and reports which are considered to have been "hoax." The only truly reliable account of the deal with this century-old wave, and one which draws well in the light of the prevailing social and scientific attitudes of the age. Somewhat difficult to read because of dot-matrix print—but persevere, and ye shall be rewarded! \$50.00
- K. THE AIRSHIP CHRONICLE. No date, 26pp, spiral bound. Case synopses of airship sightings from August, 1896 through May 7, 1897, with the great majority drawn from the April 1897 period. Marvellous item for Fortians, UFO researchers and students of "hoax-made" UFOs. \$40.00
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- N. Bartschfield, Keith, and Vladimir Golic, eds. MEMORANDA, AUSTRALIA—20th-JAN-UAR 1945 THE AIRSHIP REPORT. 1948, 70pp, stapled. This was the incident which featured a "hoax" airship lifted off the ground and then dropped back to it and the discovery of some strange objects on the vehicle. Here is the UFO Research Australia investigation. \$14.00
- O. Minkler, Lewis. CATALOG OF UFO-LIKE DATA BEYOND 1947. No date, 84pp, contains of Part I and 2. Great item for proto-ufoologists. \$78.00
- P. FUNK & MAGNALL'S STANDARD DICTIONARY OF FOLKLORE, MYTHOLOGY AND LEGEND. Harpers, '64, 8 1/2 x 11 softbound, 1236pp. Had to look up "Mephala" yesterday. Looked all over my bible, ancient histories and folklore texts, but found it only here. A must! \$14.9
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 B. Vol 2: 1948. 106pp text, + index, \$8.95  
 C. Vol 3: January-June, 1949. 86pp text + index, \$8.95  
 D. Vol 4: July-December, 1949. 79pp text, + index, \$8.95
- U. Swinton, William. THE CENTER OF THE VORTEX. Tubes, '66. 8 1/2 x 11, spiral bound, 86 An energy-related work, with physical energies being related to spiritual ones. \$1

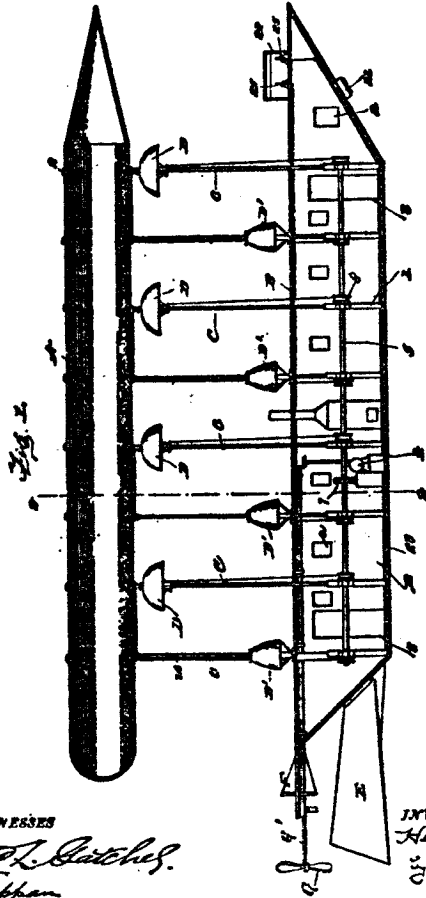
(No Model.)

H. HEINTZ.  
AIR SHIP.

3 Sheets—Sheet 1.

No. 580,941.

Patented Apr. 20, 1897.



WITNESSES  
*Geo. L. Satchel*  
*J. H. Kappan*

INVENTOR,  
*H. Heintz*  
*J. H. Madeline*  
 Attorney



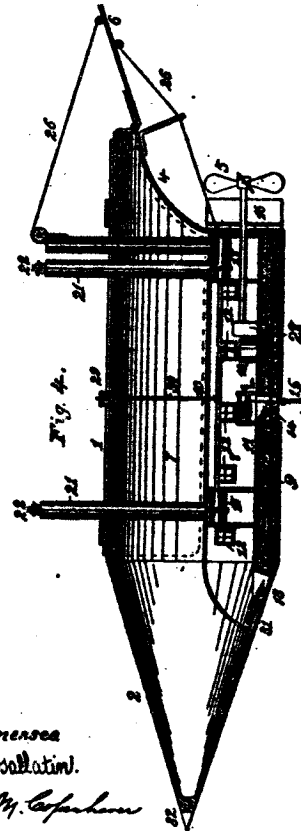
(No Model.)

O. A. SMITH.  
AIR SHIP.

3 Sheets—Sheet 2.

No. 565,805.

Patented Aug. 11, 1896.



Witnesses  
*A. B. Gallatin*  
*Jas. M. Capshaw*

*C. A. Smith*  
 Inventor,  
*D. B. Gallatin*  
 Attorney



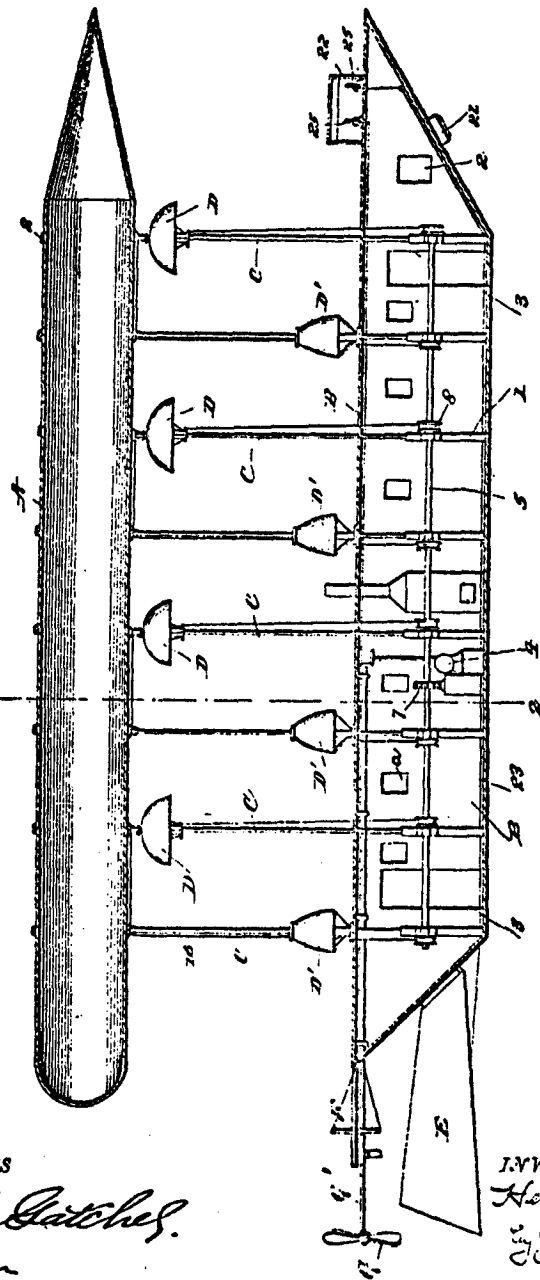
No. 580,941.

AIR SHIP.

Patented Apr. 20, 1897.

1 of 2 57

Fig. 1.



WITNESSES  
*Theo. L. Catches.*  
*J. E. Appan*

INVENTOR.  
 Henry Heintz,  
 by *John W. Alderson*  
 Attorney

Reproduction of an airship patent granted Henry Heintz of Elkton, South Dakota, on April 20, 1897. (Courtesy of the U.S. Patent Office, Washington, D.C.)

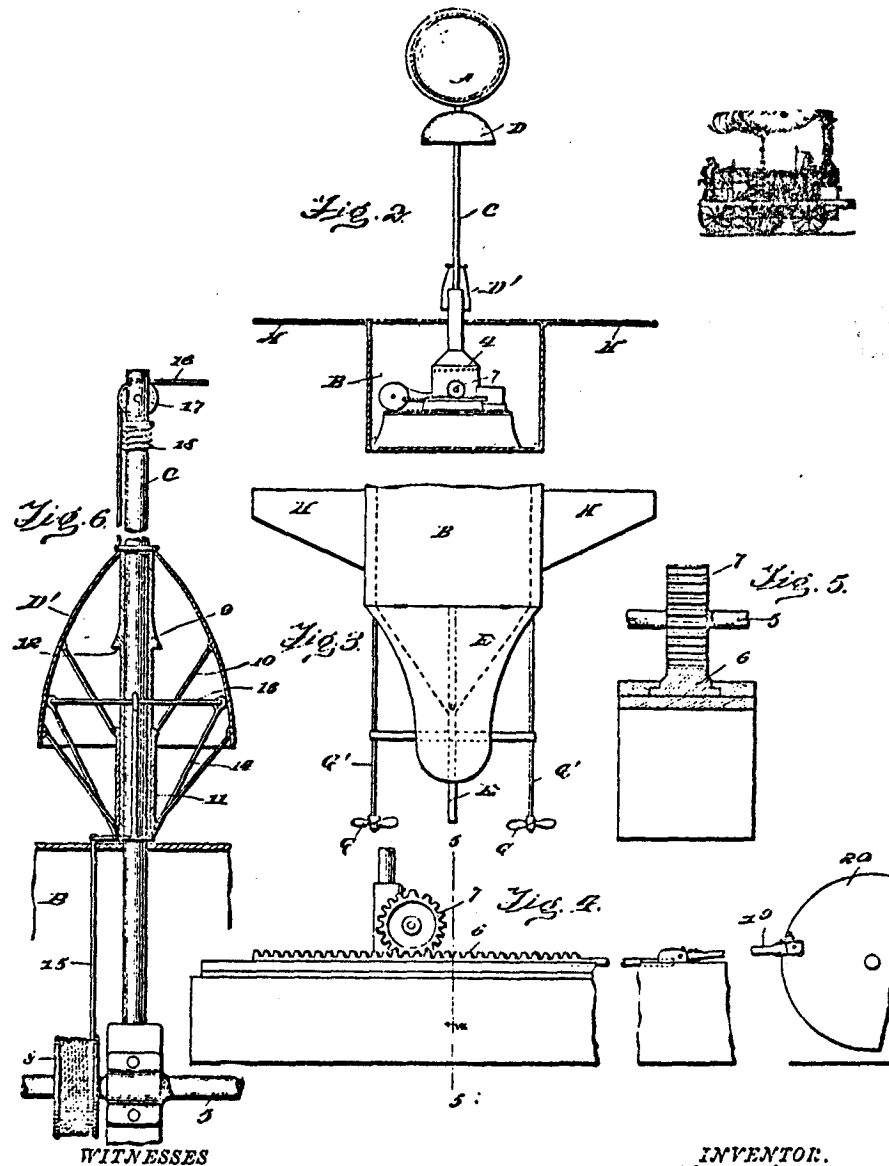
(NO MODEL.)

H. HEINTZ.  
AIR SHIP.

2 Sheets—Sheet 2.

No. 580,941.

Patented Apr. 20, 1897.



WITNESSES  
*Theo. L. Catches.*  
*J. E. Appan*

INVENTOR.  
 Henry Heintz,  
 by *John W. Alderson*  
 Attorney

**Cincuenta años antes de que la palabra OVNI fuera inventada, numerosos testigos estadounidenses mencionaban extraños aparatos que surcaban el cielo. Se habló incluso de "marcianos" y más tarde los historiadores sentenciaron que todo había sido un fraude. Recientes investigaciones han empezado a arrojar luz sobre esta historia.**

por Santiago Camacho

**E**l año 1897 fue un período de grandes logros y esperanzas en la historia de la humanidad. Aquella fue una época de maravillas en la que se produjo uno de los primeros casos OVNI documentados de la historia; éste aún suscita controversia entre los ufólogos. Nos referimos a la oleada de avistamientos OVNI que se produjo en Estados Unidos entre 1896-97, y que pasaron a la historia bajo el nombre de *Airships* (naves aéreas). Todo comenzó el 18 de noviembre de 1896, cuando el *Sacramento Bee* recogía el avistamiento de algo que parecía "un inmenso cigarro con cuatro grandes alas conectadas a un cuerpo de aluminio". Miles de videntes pudieron verlo. A partir de ahí, y durante todo el año siguiente, las observaciones de objetos similares se sucedieron en California, Nevada, Utah, Nebraska,

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Nuevo México, Arizona, Oklahoma, Louisiana y, sobre todo, Texas, donde durante el mes de marzo de 1897 tuvo lugar una oleada casi continua de incidentes de este tipo.

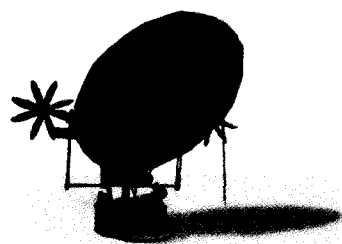
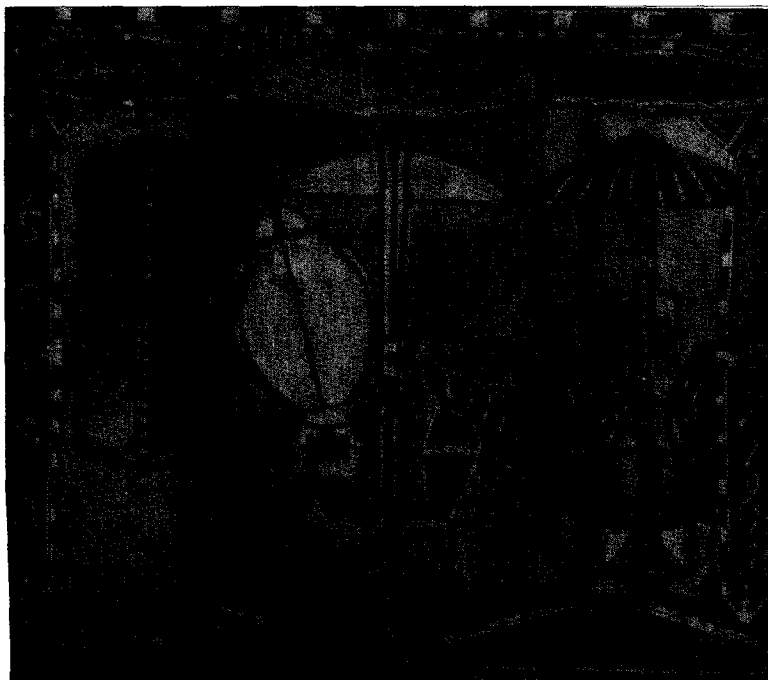
Los periódicos no dejaron de imprimir historias de naves que surcaban el cielo. Muchos ciudadanos se acercaron a los periódicos para contar sus encuentros nocturnos con aquellas extrañas máquinas voladoras. Pero no todos los relatos fueron publicados. A veces, sólo el testimonio de personas de sólida reputación conseguía vencer la resistencia de los editores, que aun así se curaban en salud mostrando su escepticismo en sus editoriales.

#### **LA PRIMERA "OLEADA OVNI"**

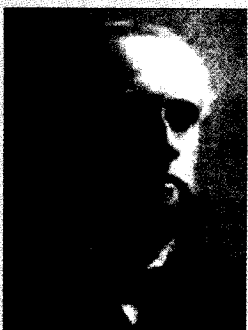
¿Cómo explicar este fenómeno? ¿La imaginación delirante de los testigos? ¿Dema-

siado alcohol en la taberna? ¿Histeria colectiva? ¿Un fraude a gran escala? Aunque el misterio comenzó en California con la observación inicial en Sacramento el 18 de noviembre de 1896 (seguida de numerosas observaciones en San Francisco y otras ciudades de California), pronto, en otras regiones se informó de la presencia de los extraños aparatos. Usando como guía los relatos de los periódicos, uno puede comprobar que los avistamientos siguen una ruta identificable desde California, siguiendo hacia el Este hasta llegar a Illinois, Indiana y Michigan, cambiando entonces su curso hacia el Sur atravesando Missouri, Kansas y Oklahoma hasta llegar a Texas y Luisiana en abril de 1897.

A lo largo de toda esta ruta los informes de los avistamientos siguieron un mismo patrón general (ver recuadro). Los testigos



Los dibujos de Charles Dellschau fueron la primera pista para desentrañar la increíble historia de las naves aéreas.



De arriba abajo, algunos de los protagonistas de esta fascinante historia: Charles Dellschau, el capitán Samuel Tillman, el profesor Amos Dolbear y el doctor Salomon Andrews.

A la derecha, la representación de estos mismos personajes, acompañados ocasionalmente con un gato, ha quedado plasmada en los dibujos del excéntrico Dellschau.

solían permanecer en silencio hasta que un miembro respetable de la comunidad informaba de la observación. Entonces, otros testigos perdían el miedo a hablar. Si hacemos caso a lo que nos cuentan los testigos hubo casi un centenar de observaciones de "naves aéreas" en los Estados Unidos durante los años 1896-97, la mayoría de ellas en los estados del Medio Oeste; eso sin contar los casos que nunca llegaron a oídos de la prensa y aquellos que nunca fueron recogidos a causa de las dudas de los editores. Así, tenemos por ejemplo el caso mencionado en el clásico *Pasaporte a Magonia* de **Jacques Vallée**, que tuvo lugar en Sioux City (Iowa) el 26 de marzo de 1897, donde un hombre llamado **Robert Hibbard** fue presuntamente enganchado por un ancla que colgaba de un aparato volador y arrastrado más de veinte metros. Ocasionalmente, los testigos vislumbraban a seres extraños que trabajaban en lo que parecía la maquinaria de las naves, lo que suscitó más inquietud aún si cabe en la opinión pública de la época. ¿Eran los enigmáticos tripulantes de estas naves extraterrestres que exploraban nuestro planeta? El momento culminante de estas observaciones tuvo lugar en Aurora, Texas, el 17 de abril de 1897, cuando uno de estos aparatos se estrelló contra un molino. Fue encontrado un cadáver calcinado, bautizado por el periodista **F. E. Hayden** como "el marciano". Para él: "Era evidente que no se trataba de un habitante de este mundo". Fue enterrado en el cementerio masónico de la localidad. Hoy, los únicos recuerdos visibles del incidente son un pequeño fragmento de lo que fue la lápida y un cartel que menciona el asunto.

#### EL ESLABÓN PERDIDO

La historia de las "naves aéreas" tiene mucho en común con los relatos de **Julio**

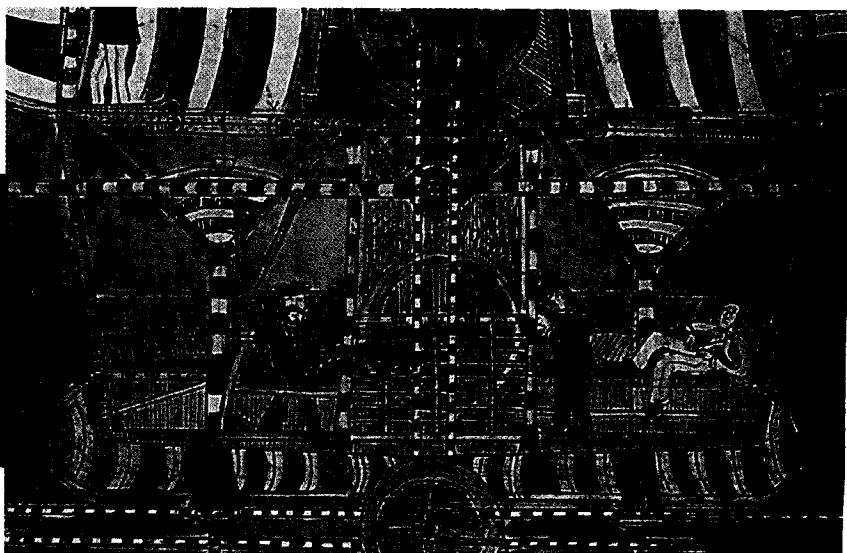
**Verne**. Pero poco a poco se ha ido desentrañando una historia menos heroica, menos mítica, pero más fascinante. Una historia de hombres normales entregados a un sueño...

En 1899, **Charles Dellschau**, un jubilado de humor huraño y mala fama entre sus vecinos, comenzó una curiosa afición: pintar dirigibles asombrosos, *collages* que muestran brillantes naves aéreas equipadas para la guerra y pilotadas por un grupo de caballeros acompañados ocasionalmente de un gato a rayas. A día de hoy, sus trabajos han alcanzado gran estima entre los coleccionistas de arte y antigüedades y una página de las libretas de Dellschau puede venderse por 15.000 dólares. Pero su contenido ilustra algo más que la fértil imaginación de su autor.

El enigma de los dibujos de Dellschau intriga tanto a historiadores de arte como a ufólogos. Los *collages* de Dellschau documentan las hazañas del Aeroclub de Sonora, un grupo reservado, casi una sociedad secreta, dedicado a la creación de *Aeros* o máquinas voladoras. Como si fuera un testamento en clave, Dellschau dejó constancia en sus libretas de cómo él y sus compañeros reinaron durante una época en los cielos estadounidenses, pilotando los dirigibles que en secreto habían construido.

En esta crónica se narran —acompañando el relato con recortes de prensa procedentes entre otros del *Scientific American* y el *Houston Chronicle*— éxitos y fracasos, espectaculares vuelos y accidentes mortales... Los aparatos son bautizados con los nombres de sus pilotos —*Aero Trump*, *Aero Schnabel*, *Aero Mary*, *Aero Jordan* y *Aero Smith* (de ahí viene el nombre del grupo musical).

Dellschau hace hincapié en el extremo sigilo con el que el club llevaba a cabo sus



actividades. La existencia de los dirigibles era un secreto que protegían celosamente. La mayor parte de los vuelos tenía lugar de noche. Por el día se recurría a ingeniosos trucos para camuflar los aparatos. Cuenta Dellschau que el piloto del *Aero Goeit* viajaba por el día disfrazado de gitano y conduciendo un carromato que, en realidad, era su nave aérea camuflada. El secreto era tan grande que, incluso después de disuelta la sociedad, el propio Dellschau escribió gran parte de sus diarios en una clave que aún no ha sido descifrada, tal vez recordando que un miembro del club demasiado locuaz fue asesinado por revelar a extraños su existencia.

### LA RUTA DEL ORO

Buena parte del misterio pudo deberse a las tremendas posibilidades comerciales que tenía el invento. Una compañía de Nueva York, *R. Porter & Company*, anunció en la prensa (1848) su proyecto de comercializar en breve viajes aéreos: "¡La mejor ruta hacia el oro de California!" La compañía dijo que organizaría vuelos de Nueva York a California en abril de 1849 y que el viaje de ida y vuelta duraría sólo siete días. Pero esto nunca se llevó a cabo. Según el relato de Dellschau, las hazañas del Aeroclub de Sonora tuvieron lugar en California entre 1848 y algún momento de la década siguiente, hasta el momento en que fallece en un accidente aéreo **Peter Mennis**, el genio que estaba detrás de la construcción de los *Aeros*. Por lo tanto, las hazañas de este grupo no tendrían con nuestra historia más que una relación meramente anecdótica de no ser por un hecho que por sí solo constituye el eslabón perdido para comenzar a desenredar el hilo de la historia de 1897.

En 1895 Charles Dellschau se instala en Texas, epicentro de la oleada que tendría

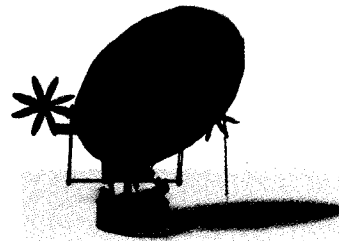
lugar dos años después, y coincide allí con tres antiguos camaradas de su grupo: el **Dr. Charles A. Smith** (el del *Aero Smith*), **Willard Wilson**, y algún colaborador, aún no identificado del **Dr. Salomón Andrews**, quien había fallecido recientemente pero que había seguido trabajando durante aquellos años en el perfeccionamiento de la navegación aérea. Dado lo ocurrido posteriormente, es muy probable que se decidieran a llevar a cabo la refundación del grupo. Pero hacía falta para ello un considerable aporte financiero que ninguno de ellos estaba en disposición de realizar. Durante la época de Sonora, de la financiación se encargaba un personaje que aparece recurrentemente en los diarios de Dellschau como el mecenas del grupo. Se trataba de **George Hearst**, padre del magnate de la prensa **William Randolph Hearst**. Pero Hearst padre falleció en 1891, por lo que la única oportunidad que tenían los veteranos de Sonora de financiar su nueva aventura era recurrir al hijo de su antiguo compañero. ¿Lo hicieron? ¿Lo consiguieron? Todo parece indicar que sí, pero que el precio fue mucho más alto que el que esperaban pagar...

### LOS PROTAGONISTAS

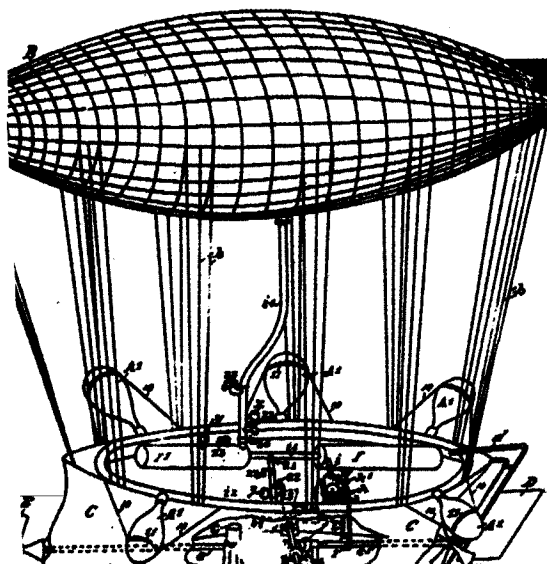
El 19 de abril de 1897, el *Dallas Morning News* y el *Galveston News* reproducían uno de los casos más notables de observación de naves aéreas. El día anterior, gran número de ciudadanos de Stephenville había sido testigo del aterrizaje de uno de estos aparatos, teniendo ocasión de conversar con sus tripulantes, que se identificaron como el capitán **Samuel E. Tillman** y el profesor **Amos E. Dolbear**. Entre otras interesantes revelaciones realizadas por la pareja a sus interlocutores, ambos confirmaron la existencia de otras naves y comentaron que el proyecto era financiado

por un millonario de Nueva York. Éste es quizá el testimonio más valioso aportado en toda la oleada de avistamientos, ya que ambos nombres corresponden a personas reales y con una relación en absoluto circunstancial con este asunto.

El ingeniero aeronáutico e historiador científico **Michael Busby** ha realizado un esfuerzo de investigación a lo largo de seis años que ha culminado con la identificación de varios de los principales implicados en la trama de las naves aéreas, sus relaciones y sus actividades en esta época. Amos E. Dolbear era profesor en la *Tufts University de Massachussets*. Su especialidad eran los motores eléctricos, de los que



El relato de las "naves aéreas" tiene mucho en común con los relatos de Julio Verne. Pero poco a poco se ha ido desentrañando una historia menos mítica.



## El dato

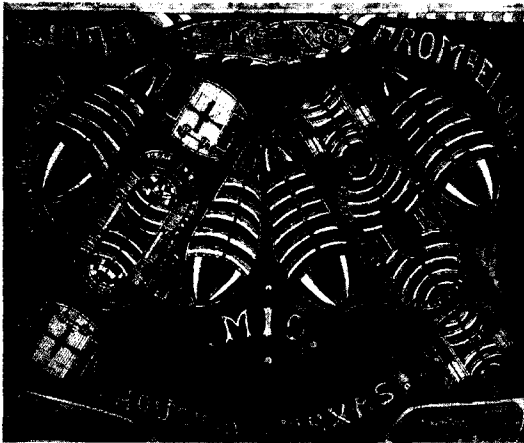
### ¿Un cadáver alienígena?

Uno de estos aparatos se estrelló en Aurora, Texas, el 17 de abril de 1897, contra un molino de viento,

estallando posteriormente. Entre los restos fue encontrado el cadáver calcinado e irreconocible del piloto... En aquella

época se especuló que podía tratarse de un "marciano". La verdad era otra muy distinta: era un hombre de carne y hueso.

construyó varios de los más grandes de aquella época. Su amigo, el capitán, **Samuel Escue Tillman** era profesor de química en la Academia Militar de *West Point* y es probable que fuera el enlace militar en las actividades del grupo, ya que durante la primavera de 1897 se encontraba ausente de la academia en cumplimiento de una "misión especial". Las investigaciones de Busby han revelado



que ambos científicos conocían a "un millonario de Nueva York" en posición de financiar su empresa. Efectivamente, se trataba del hijo del antiguo mecenas del Aeroclub de Sonora, **William Randolph Hearst**, propietario del *San Francisco Examiner* y el *New York Herald*, quien fue uno de los principales beneficiarios del asunto, ya que la extravagante historia debió incrementar las ventas de sus periódicos. Pero sus intereses iban más allá. Los múltiples contactos del multimillonario se extendían a la poderosa industria de armamento y al ejército. Busby y otros autores han documentado la vocación que ya por aquel entonces tenían las fuerzas armadas estadounidenses en embarcarse en todo tipo de proyectos secretos. De hecho, se encuentran perfectamente documentadas diversas pruebas secretas realizadas en aquella época con "globos dirigidos" para hacer un reconocimiento en territorio enemigo o transportar torpedos. Ello explicaría la presencia en el equipo de aeronautas del capitán Tillman y la misión especial que le había hecho ausentarse de *West Point*.

## EL CASO AURORA

2

A la luz de lo expuesto, el caso del presunto "marciano" que perdió la vida en su nave, toma una nueva dimensión. Si el accidente de Aurora realmente tuvo lugar, parece razonable conciliar dicho evento con otras observaciones similares ocurridas en otros lugares. Pues bien, a primeras horas de la mañana del 17 de abril de 1897, el mismo día en que horas más tarde tendría lugar el siniestro, se informó de la presencia cerca de Stephenville, 84 millas al suroeste de Aurora, de uno de aquellos dirigibles que había tomado tierra por lo que parecían dificultades técnicas, partiendo después en dirección a Aurora.

Según los testigos, el dirigible navegaba hacia el molino de viento contra el que finalmente colisionó en línea recta. Es razonable suponer que el piloto habría intentado eludir el molino si le hubiera sido posible, y en este caso también parece razonable que los testigos habrían comentado el hecho. Como los testigos no dieron cuenta de ninguna maniobra evasiva por parte del dirigible, sólo queda

## Radiografía de los avistamientos

### PRIMER AVISTAMIENTO:

### LUGARES DE LOS AVISTAMIENTOS:

2	3
4	5
6	7
8	9
10	11
12	13
14	15
16	

### PATRÓN DE LOS AVISTAMIENTOS



### ECHO MEDIÁTICO

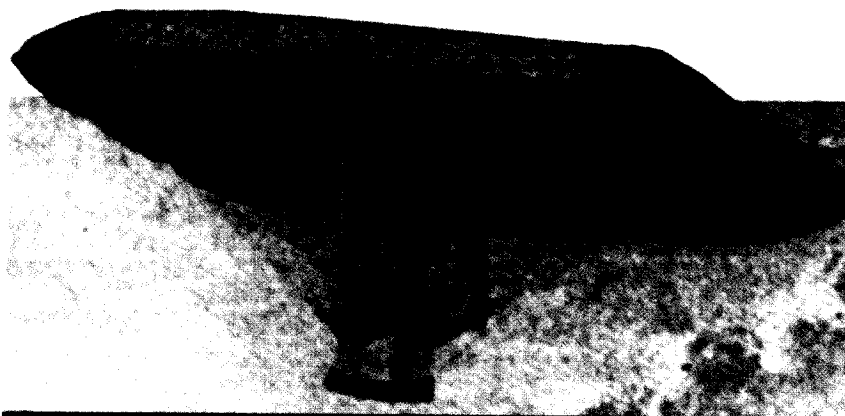




concluir que el piloto, por los motivos que fuesen, se encontraba incapacitado para llevar a cabo dicha maniobra. También es probable que el piloto simplemente perdiera el control del dirigible y no pudiera hacer nada para evitar el desastre.

En la actualidad, varios equipos de ufólogos afirman haber encontrado restos del accidente. Los análisis de este material revelaron que se trataba de aluminio, algo compatible con la tecnología de un ingenio de aquellas características y también con las declaraciones de presuntos tripulantes e inventores de los dirigibles recogidas en los periódicos de la época.

Durante los dos días siguientes a la tragedia, los avistamientos se multiplican por la zona. Todos los testigos señalan que los aparatos que han visto dirigían potentes focos hacia el suelo, como si buscaran algo, quizá a su compañero perdido. Si vamos punteando en un mapa las diversas observaciones descubriremos cómo se nos queda dibujada a la perfección la trayectoria de dos aparatos que batían una amplia zona del estado de Texas en lo que parece un patrón de búsqueda. Esta frenética actividad finaliza coincidiendo con el momento en el que el accidente de Aurora es dado a conocer



*Este grabado es el único testimonio gráfico de los experimentos militares con dirigibles llevados a cabo en EE.UU. a finales del siglo XIX.*

"MÁS ALLA"

por la prensa, el 20 de abril. Dos días después, el registro de un hotel de Nueva Orleans nos revela que dos de los intrépidos pilotos, Tillman y Dolbear, se habían retirado a aquella ciudad para disfrutar de un merecido descanso y quién sabe si llorar al compañero caído.

Respecto al destino del resto de los dirigibles y sus pilotos, sólo podemos especular. Es probable que aquél fuera el primero de tantos proyectos de alto secreto del ejército estadounidense que se han

mantenido ocultos a la opinión pública hasta que su tecnología ha quedado obsoleta. También es posible que a esto contribuyese la tremenda influencia que tenía la industria del ferrocarril, la mayor afectada, como se pudo comprobar décadas más tarde, por la aparición del transporte aéreo. En cualquier caso, es muy difícil que algún día la historia rinda el tributo que se merece aquel grupo de pioneros, casi sacados de una novela de Julio Verne, que se atrevieron a "tocar" el cielo. ■

## 30 Comunicados

- Le Parisien Libéré, 14.9.54
- La Montagne, 14.9.54
- La Croix, 14.9.54
- Citoyenneté, 14.9.54
- Feuille d'Aviz de Neuchâtel, 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'Aviz de Neuchâtel, 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 Blocher, 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-fantômes aux Etats-Unis**.

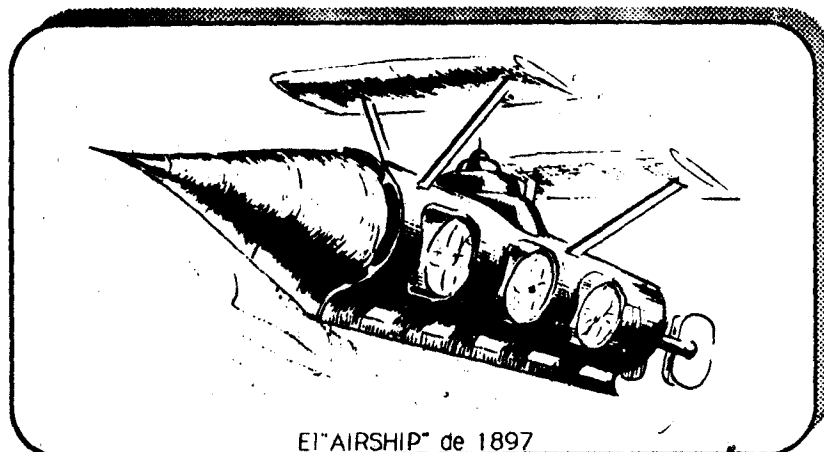
Se trata de una edición artesanal que cuenta con 373 páginas. Para reunir esta documentación inmediata, Jean Sider ha tenido que contactar con numerosos organismos especializados (bibliotecas públicas, museos, universidades, etc) e incluso pagar a estudiantes americanos para que llevaran a cabo revisiones 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 residentes en Francia, por cheque bancario expedido a Thierry Pinvidic, 7 Hameau de la Florida, 91800 Brunoy, Francia.

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 Bruxelles, Bélgica.



El "AIRSHIP" de 1897

AIRSHIPS, SAYS HART.

His Signature the Torney Tells of His Client.

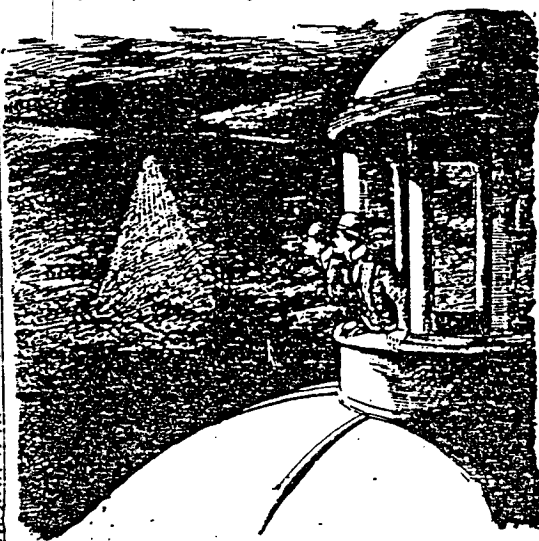
WHY AND HOW OF THE MYSTIC LIGHTS.

Again the Brilliant Shafts Sighted Speeding Above the Bay Counties.

LIGENT TESTIMONY OF STAID CITIZENS.

75 in Hayward's Hunt on the Arramontes very-Professor Cross, the Linguist, Adds His Evidence.

Viewing the Mysterious Aerial Light From the Dome of the State Capitol.



HART'S INVENTOR HAS THREE AERIAL FLIERS.

A Full Statement Made Over the Signature of the Attorney for the Alleged Cuban Filibuster.

In addition to the party which has been putting and maintaining many of the projects of Cuba...

I have not seen it personally, but have talked with the man who claims to be the inventor...

I was surprised that they are more anxious for the purpose for which he claims than any other...

It would be surprising that the inventor of the 'Call' has been successful enough to receive...

I would the inventor of the 'Call' has been successful enough to receive...

I would the inventor of the 'Call' has been successful enough to receive...

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SLAUGHTER SPANIARDS

Cuba Insurgents Claim to Have Killed 2000 in One Battle.

THRILLING STORY TOLD BY BLOS.

News of an Important Victory Brrought by a Lieutenant in General's Army.

HYDRAULIC OPERATION THE WORK OF THE SPANIARDS.

The True Cause Given in the State that is Being Done.

NEW YORK, N. Y., Nov. 23.—The insurrection in Cuba has been a most successful one...

The insurrection in Cuba has been a most successful one...

The insurrection in Cuba has been a most successful one...

The insurrection in Cuba has been a most successful one...

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The insurrection in Cuba has been a most successful one...

We watched the light finally disappear behind the horizon.

When the ship turned to the southeast I could distinguish two lights, one behind the other. The single light first seen was about the size of an engine headlight and had more of the appearance of a large incandescent light than anything else. It was moving at the rate of from 60 to 100 miles an hour only a few moments before it had disappeared behind the horizon.

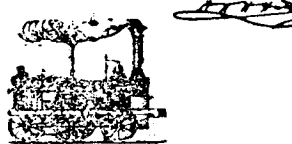
There were three things regarding the light which impressed me, viz.: its velocity, its regular movement and its apparent intelligent control... I have seen many fire-balloons, but the light I saw had none of the characteristics of such a toy. Its velocity was great for a balloon on such a still night and its movements too regular. The light was about 1500 feet high when first seen, and may have continued at that elevation, but it appeared to lower as it disappeared... the party consisted of Professor Cross, Dr. and Mrs. Allen, Colonel and Mrs. Moore, Miss Annie Chase, and Mrs. Worcester.

Professor Cross backed up his colleague:

I was visiting at the residence of Professor Worcester and was called into the yard by him to view the airship. Whether it was in fact an airship, of course, I am not prepared to say, but certain it is there was a rapidly moving light in the heavens far too large and bright to be an electric street light. To my eye, it appeared to be about six inches in diameter. It was moving in a southerly direction and apparently at a high rate of speed.

The motion was not steady. It wavered and swerved, rising and falling slightly. The motion, however, was not that of a balloon. I have frequently watched balloons in the air, and the motion of this light was in no way suggestive of the manner in which I have always seen them behave. Moreover, it was a quiet night. What slight wind there was, I think, was from the south. Yet this light traveled rapidly in a southerly direction. As it left us, the light seemed to broaden. This suggested to us that there might be two lights which as the craft swung broadside to us, joined rays and gave the appearance of a wide streak of light.

Professor Worcester described the light's undulatory, bat-like flight, as suggestive of the "alternated flapping



WHY LEVI STRAUSS & CO'S... SEND FOR A SAMPLE...

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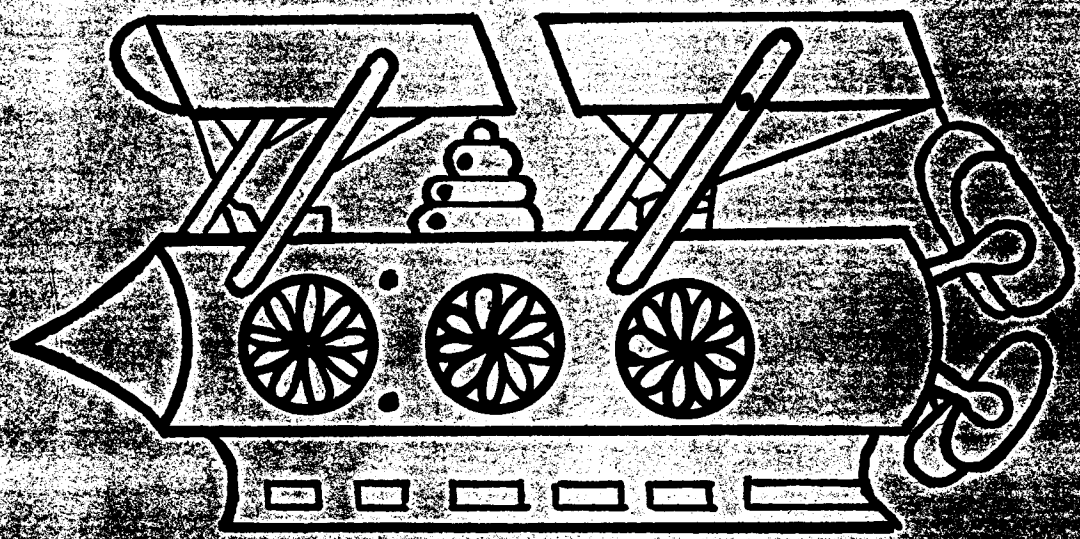
# FLYING SAUCER REVIEW

**JULY - AUGUST 1966**



**VOLUME 12, No. 4**

**12th YEAR OF PUBLICATION**



Was it a UFO that  
appeared like this  
to a witness just  
before the turn of the  
century?

See . . .

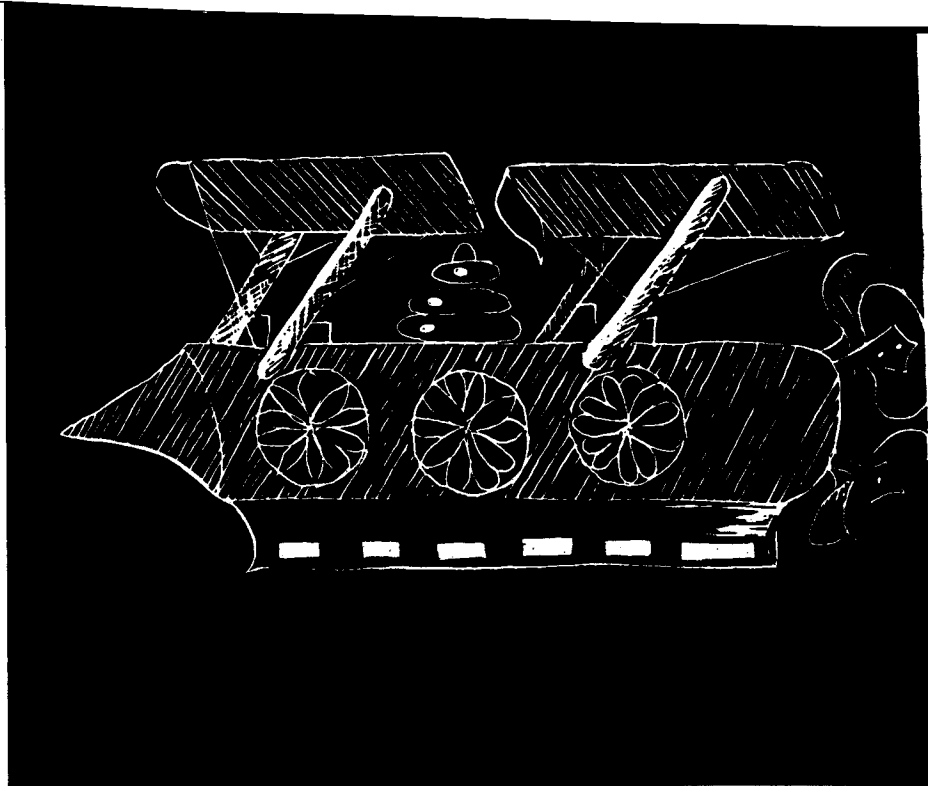
## THE STRANGE CASE OF THE 1897 AIRSHIP

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

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

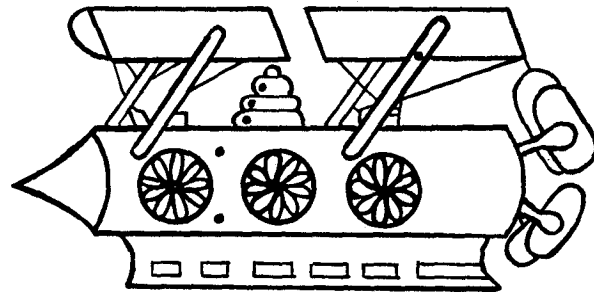
famous airship seen by so many people about the country.

"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

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 Winchester—for we were now thoroughly arou-

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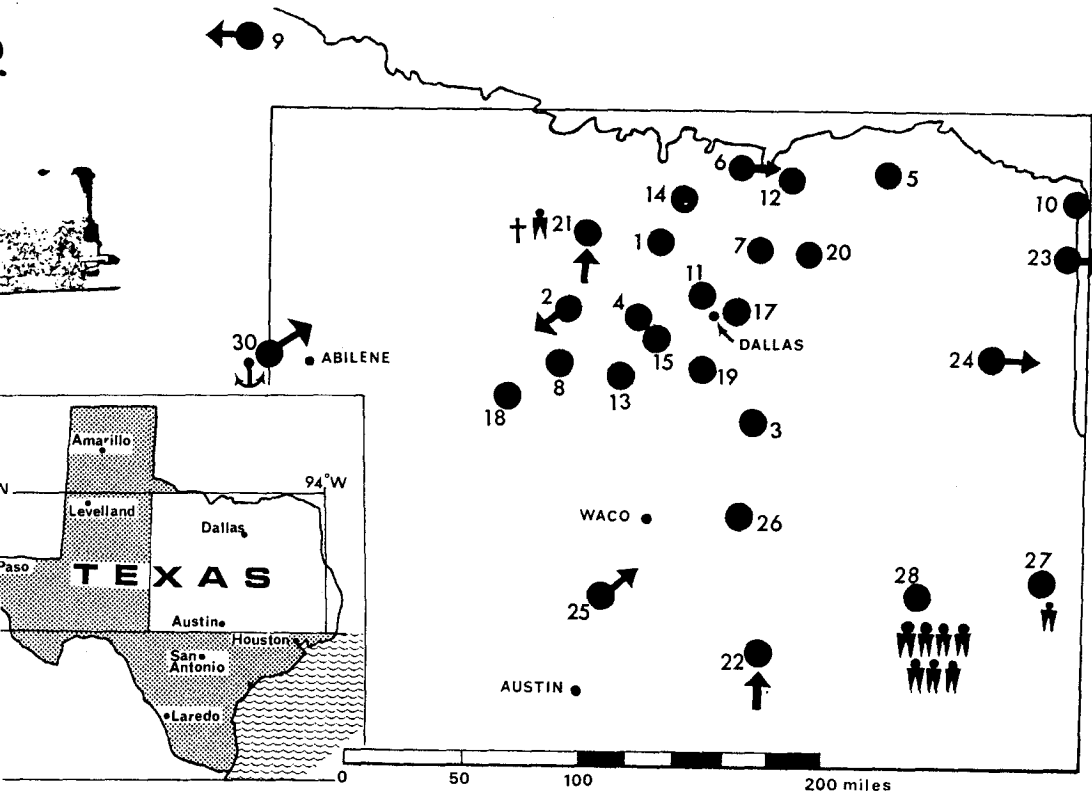
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the ship is supposed to have been the only one and while his remains are badly disfigured, of the original has been picked up to show that not an inhabitant of this world. Mr. T. J. Weems, Signal Service officer at this place and an expert on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that he believes it to be the airship of the planet Mars. Papers found on his ship evidently the records of his travels—are written in unknown hieroglyphics, and cannot be deciphered. This ship was too badly wrecked to form any idea as to its construction or motive power. It was made of an unknown metal, resembling somewhat a mixture of aluminum and silver, and it must have weighed many tons. The town today is full of people who are looking at the wreckage and gather specimens of strange things from the debris. The pilot's funeral will take place tomorrow. Signed: E. E. Haydon.' (see note

1: 'A number of Bryan people claim to have seen a mysterious airship pass over that town Saturday night. It was going north.'

2: 'There was considerable excitement here caused by a visitation last night by the mysterious airship. It was first seen by Jim Nelson, a farmer, about five and a half miles west of here. He had walked his yard just after midnight, when his attention was attracted by a peculiar noise and looking up he discovered

it 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

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 cracksmen, 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

of cold chisels. I suppose the articles and the Here is a ten-day and keep the chisels.

Mr. Barclay Let me go an Smith said: "any nearer, business will be a future day and on a trip."

Mr. Barclay chisels, but change and M but same was and thanked follow him to him and asked he was going.

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sort above the luminous point (according to newspaper accounts).

The strange flying light appeared a second time, so the story goes, on the evening of November 21, at which time the public and press are said to have taken the phenomenon much more seriously. Reportedly, witnesses to the second passage included a sizable number of the citizens of Sacramento, but, as before, a dark, cloudy sky masked any detail that would explain how the light was being carried through the atmosphere.

Soon after the light passed out of sight, it was reportedly seen over the city of Folsom, some twenty miles to the west. Later that night, reports of lights in the heavens came in from the San Francisco Bay area.

Unexplained flying lights and the story of the sighting of an airship by one R. L. Lowry prompted a San Francisco attorney to "disclose" that a man had supposedly contacted him some months earlier for legal advice concerning the "world's first practical airship," a craft that the supposed inventor asserted he had nearly completed. Flashing impressive blueprints and boasting of strong financial backing, the inventor convinced the attorney that the airship would soon be operational. The attorney, a George D. Collins, told the press that, in his opinion, the phenomenon in the skies over Sacramento must have been his client conducting nocturnal test flights before making an official announcement of his secret invention. This suggestion, a reasonable one in the minds of many, was given extensive publicity by San Francisco newspapers, stirring up imaginations all over California. Rumors and wild stories soon began to spread. For a while, the "phantom airship" was the biggest news story in northern California.

As more reports of strange lights in the sky were tallied, enhancing the mystery, Attorney Collins became so tormented by reporters and curious busybodies that he regretted his earlier bragging and fled into hiding.

Cities reporting airship sightings after November 23 included Stockton, Lathrop, Sebastopol, Santa Rosa, Red

Bluff, Chico, Auburn, San Jose, Modesto, Woodland, Fresno, Visalia, Hanford, Bakersfield, Tulare, Delano, Los Angeles, Redlands, and Anderson.

As to the exact nature of the mystery light, many reports were vague, mentioning only a bright light in the western sky early in the evening, indicating possible confusion with the planet Venus. Reported velocities of the light as it passed overhead were slow by modern standards, and if one considers the testimony of a number of witnesses that the light moved in an undulating fashion, this might indicate that some sightings were due to wind-blown balloons with a lantern attached. Again, some witnesses said they saw something large supporting the light but very few details were given. The most common terms used to describe the "supporting structure" were: "dark body," "misty mass," "cigar-shaped," "egg-shaped," and "barrel-shaped."

In spite of the difficulties involved, about a half-dozen reports can be explained satisfactorily. These were the sightings of three strange lights in the heavens a month before the passage of the mystery light (or lights) over Sacramento. There is a good possibility that people were confusing the "phantom airship" with the passage of a triple-headed bolide that had crossed the night sky with majestic slowness several weeks previously.

However, all things considered, there were still some puzzling episodes that took place in November 1896:

(1) A fiery object displaying three points of light was spotted resting on the ground near Knight's Ferry, California. Two witnesses, both Methodist ministers, said the thing suddenly took off as they approached, flying away in a shallow climb.

(2) A fast-moving cigar-shaped object surrounded by a shifting luminosity and making small explosions was reported by the captain of a steamboat.

(3) According to hundreds of citizens of Tulare, California, of which fifteen are named in news accounts, something in the night sky came down quite a distance, and then went up and took a straight, quick move westward. Red, white, and blue lights were seen in succession.

(4) A resident of Tacoma, Washington, said he watched something strange in the sky over Mount Rainier one night. For over an hour, he said, an object emitted various colored rays, which shot out from the thing's center in every direction like spokes of a wheel. The "object" reportedly moved about with a waving motion, swayed back and forth, and darted from one position to another.

The Canadian press, which reported on the puzzling events taking place in California, seemed to take the airship possibility very seriously, even though one of the most intriguing reports of the year came from Rossland, British Columbia, on August 12, 1896. It told of a strange aerial body that approached the town, paused momentarily above a nearby mountain peak, made several 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 colors." The object



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>4</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*:

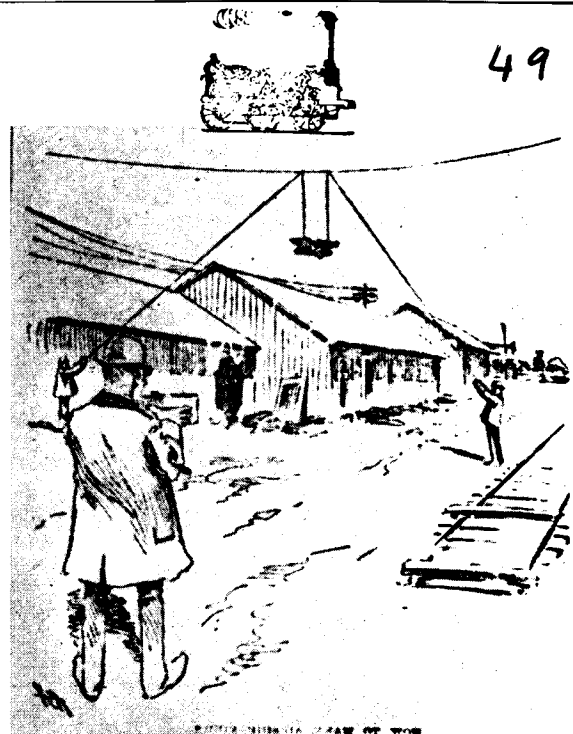
"Taylors Falls, Minnesota, April 10—The famous airship has been found near here. Upon receipt of a bulletin from Minneapolis, your correspondent hastened to the thick woods south of town. He penetrated them with great care. Moving cautiously he came to the edge of a considerable clearing in which he 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 winglike 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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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"

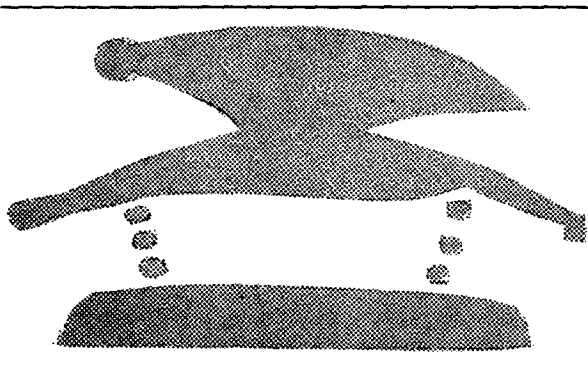
Residents of Appleton, Wisconsin, saw the mysterious object pass over their city on the night of the 11th, and a few days later, N. B. Clark, a farmer living north of the town, found an 18in. iron rod sticking in the ground. Attached to it, he told a local newspaper, was an unsigned letter:

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 Lafayette, 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 Lafayette 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.

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. 50

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."

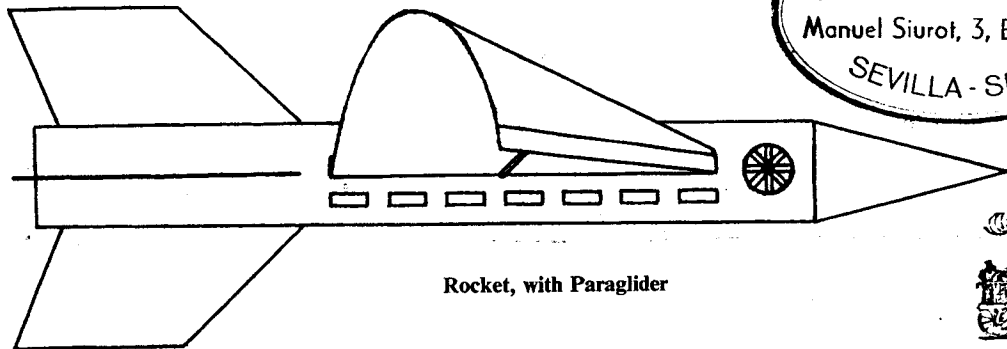
Suddenly there was an explosion. Sparks flew, and the ship began to descend from an altitude of a mile down to a half-mile. Another explosion sounded, sparks flew from the wheel, and the craft began to rise again. Its two lights—a red one in front, a light blue one behind—went out, and it no longer could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

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FSR, N<sup>o</sup> 6, 1.967

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.

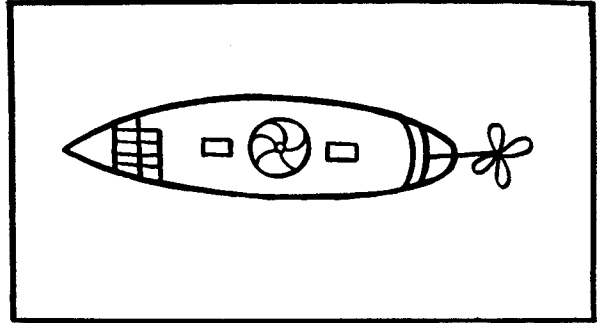
<sup>3</sup> Captain Hooton left a sketch of the airship he claimed to have encountered, and this Heath-Robinson looking object will be found adorning the cover of the July/August 1966 issue of the REVIEW.

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.
- <sup>5</sup> 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.  
*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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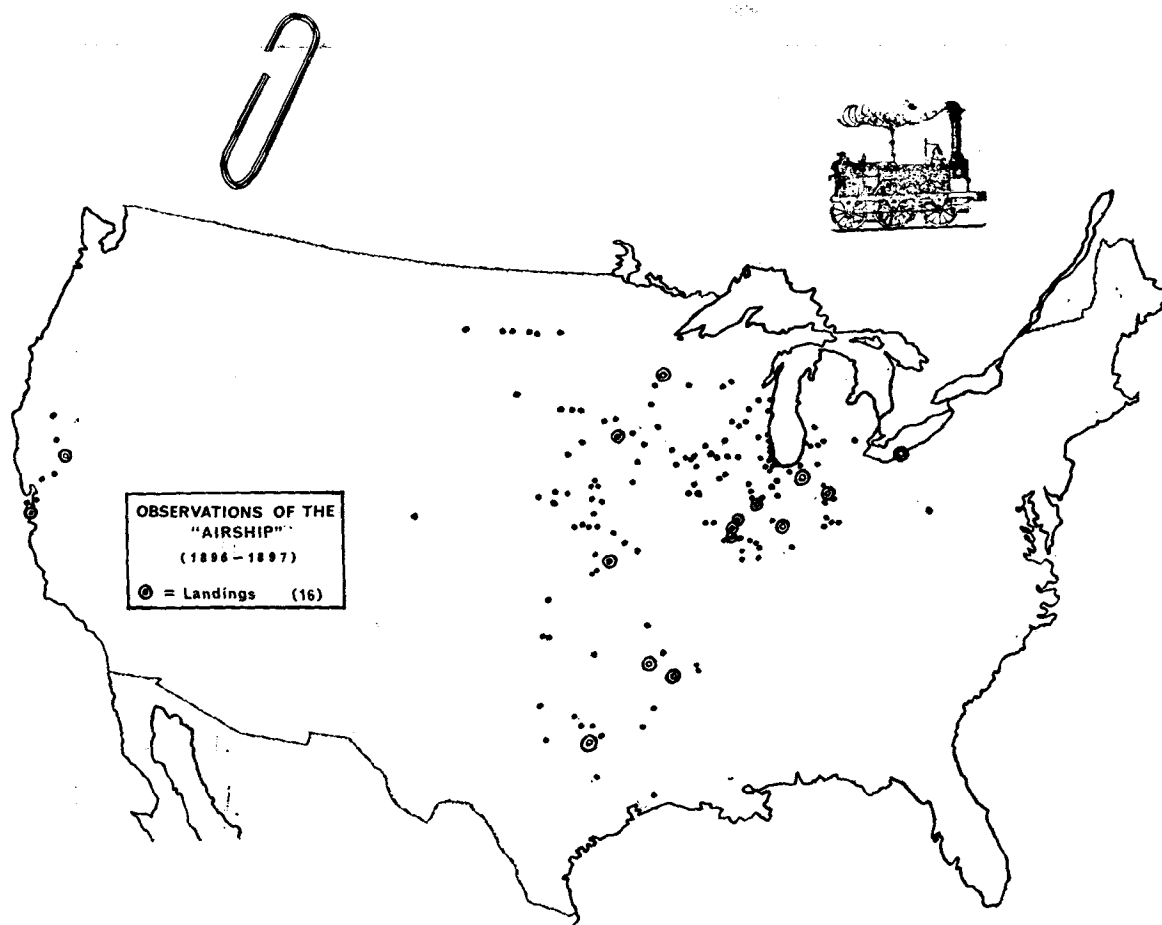


Fig. 1

Based on a sketch by J. Vallée 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.

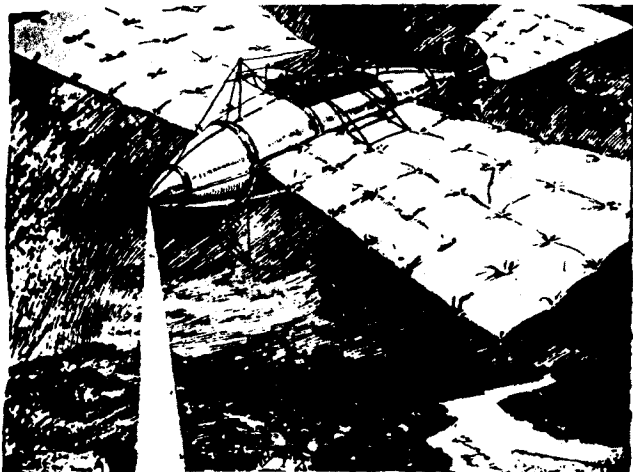
"It sailed directly over the public square, and when it reached the north part of town collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went to pieces with a terrific explosion, scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank, and destroying the judge's flower 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



This airship (above) seen over Oakland, California, in November 1896, was identical to one seen earlier over Sacramento. *Right:* Winged airship seen in Oakland, California, on November 22, 1896. (Courtesy ICUFON)

What differentiated these UFOs from modern day UFOs was that the majority of occupant cases involved flight crews who appeared to be ordinary American citizens and claimed that their invention was about to revolutionize travel and transportation. One series of encounters which perpetuated this claim involved a mysterious man named WILSON. Witnesses often gave or sold water, food and repair equipment to UFO crews. Singing and music was sometimes heard as low-flying UFOs passed overhead. Mysterious rusted iron rods were found on the ground. Attached to them were letters reportedly left by airship crews stating the capabilities of their craft and the impact they would soon have upon the world.

Not all occupant encounters were pleasant. Some witnesses described the appearance of the crews as hideous, while others claimed they jabbered in an unknown language. In LE ROY, KANSAS, Alexander Hamilton reported that his cow had been carried off by an airship. A sensational airship disaster was reported in AURORA, TEXAS, supposedly resulting in the death of its extraterrestrial pilot.

As airship hysteria seized the nation, many HOAXES began to be uncovered. Eager witnesses ascribed fantastic qualities to hot-air balloons constructed of tissue paper, with candles used to supply hot air and light. Journalists wrote tongue-in-cheek tales which sometimes sounded no more absurd than the reports of seemingly sincere and honest citizens. Would-be inventors of the marvelous machines sprung up around the nation. Two photographs taken by Walter McCann in ROGERS PARK, ILLINOIS, were proclaimed genuine by the *Chicago Times-Herald* and the *New York Herald*. The *Chicago Tribune*, however, declared them fakes.

The case of the mystery airships has never been solved. Astronomers from 1896 until the present time



have attributed the sightings to misidentifications of STARS, PLANETS, FIREBALLS and PLASMA. Others ascribed the phenomenon to hoaxes, HALLUCINATIONS and alcohol. Among those who believed in the reality of the airships, the prevailing theory was that they were a secret invention. The EXTRATERRESTRIAL HYPOTHESIS (ETH) was considered as a possibility by those who thought Mars was inhabited by normal, air-breathing human beings. Another explanation concerned advertisers who sometimes employed balloons for publicity stunts. Some preposterous theories were developed such as that of the man who claimed he had originated the entire phenomenon by setting loose a pelican with a Japanese lantern tied to its leg.

Present day proponents of the PARALLEL UNIVERSE HYPOTHESIS believe the airship sightings may have been perpetrated by beings from another dimension. Their intention was either a joke to lead people astray, or a hint of future possibilities to spur mankind along the path of technological development. Other UFOLOGISTS suggest that the ETH cannot be ruled out since it is possible that the UFOs were spacecraft inaccurately described in terms of the emerging technology familiar to people of that period.

Bibliography: Jacobs, David Michael, *The UFO Controversy in America* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1975); Keel, John A., *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970).

**AIR TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE CENTER (ATIC)**, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE (USAF) division which was formerly known as the Intelligence Division of the Air Material Command (AMC) at Wright Field, Ohio (now Wright-Patterson Air Force Base), and which was the base for UFO investigations until 1961, when

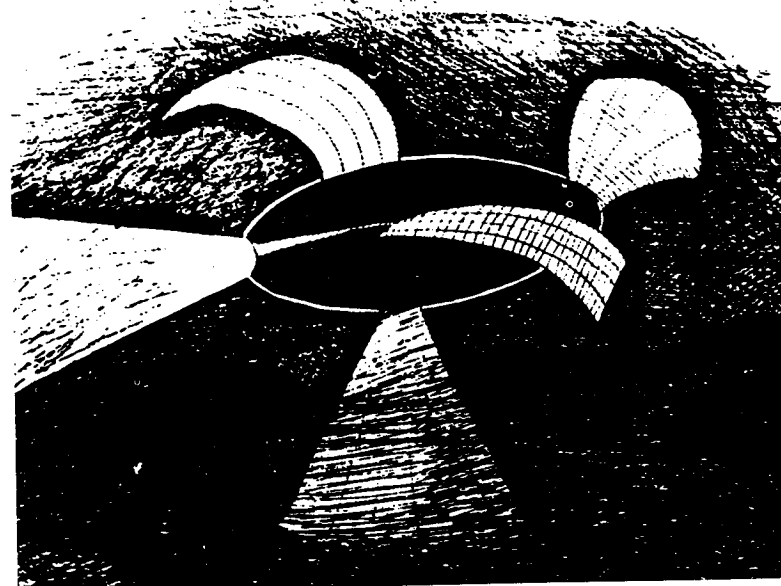
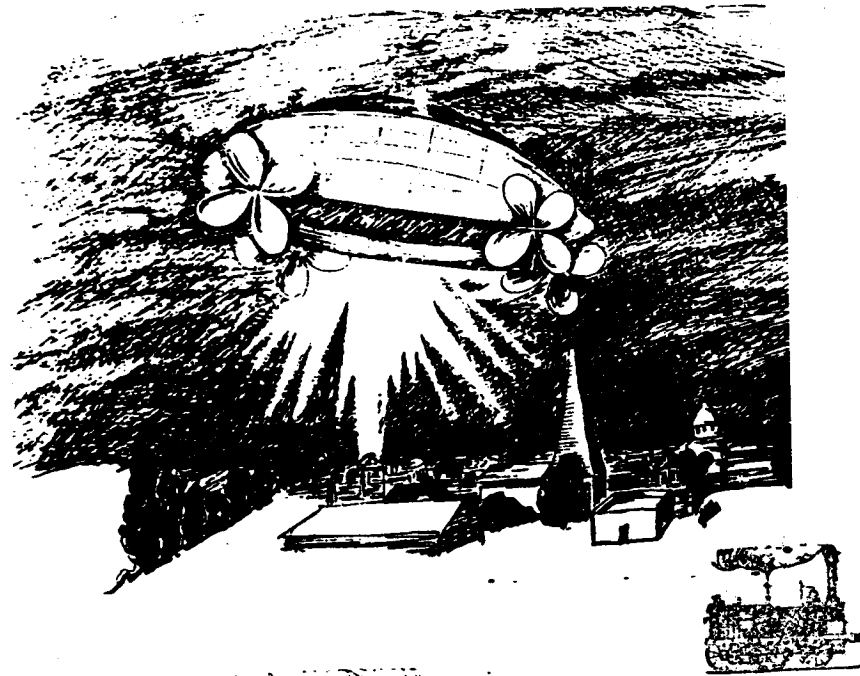
phenomenon came to be known as the "famous airship." Localities were genuinely insulted if the airship did not pay them at least one visit. In many places the airship became the prime topic of conversation. "People talk of nothing else," said one newspaper. Another paper complained that there would soon be a new disease known as "airship neck" resulting from people craning their necks to get a look at the thing. Witnesses to the airship's passage included governors, cigar store owners, and ranchers—in short, just about anybody and everybody.

In addition to the sighting reports, the newspapers carried more thrilling tales: accounts of meetings with the crew and the inventor of the airship, and trips aboard it at one hundred miles an hour or more. There were even a few hints that the origins of the airship were not necessarily of this earth.

America had never before experienced anything quite like the excitement generated by the mystery airship of 1896 and 1897, and was not to experience anything like it again for half a century.

What makes the story so astonishing is that as far as official aviation history is concerned, there was no airship, and there could not possibly have been one. The successful flight of the Wright brothers was still seven years in the future. Besides, the sort of sustained flight that was reported for the mystery airship would not be attained by airplanes for many years after the Wright brothers' first twelve-second flight.

The dirigible type of airship, that is, a rigid steerable balloon, was farther along in development in 1896, and in most reports the mystery airship sounds as if it were some sort of cigar-shaped dirigible. But again the known history of flight contains nothing about a wide-ranging dirigible in the United States in the late 1890s. Indeed, most historians of aviation would insist that a highly successful dirigible was impossible because the level of technological development was not high enough to produce such a vehicle at that time.



Two artists' conceptions of the airship that appeared in newspapers of the era (From the files of August C. Roberts)

the lights were manipulated there were at least three men on it. . . .

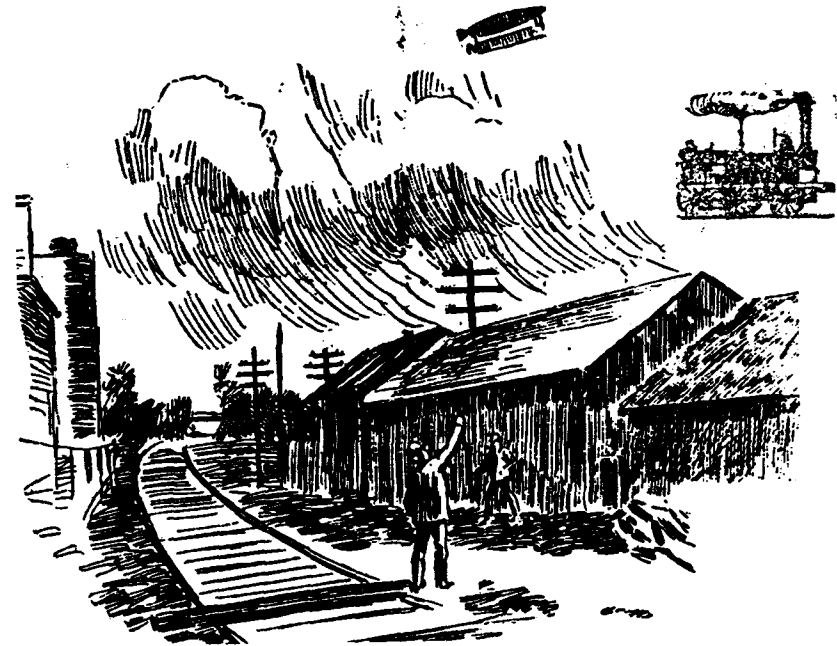
"Men who see it agree as to the general appearance of the airship, but they differ as to the size of it. One witness said he thought it was about seventy feet long, another put it at twice that size, and still another said it was not more than fifty feet in length."

A sensational new element was added to the airship controversy on April 11, when a young newsdealer in Rogers Park, then a northern suburb of Chicago, produced what he said was a genuine photograph of the airship in flight. About 5:30 A.M., Walter McCann was picking up his consignment of newspapers at the Northwestern Railway tracks when he saw a strange object in the sky coming from the south.

"It looked like a big cigar. It came nearer and I saw at a glance that it was not a balloon. Quick as a flash I realized it was the much talked of air ship. My boy won a camera not long ago in a contest for getting subscribers to a paper. It was in the store, fifty feet from where I stood gazing at the object. I ran and got it as the thing approached. The sky was clear. Conditions favored a good photograph. A plate was ready. I ran to Greenleaf avenue and Market street and got a good shot at it. With G. A. Overocker, whose attention was attracted to it, I ran down the Northwestern tracks and we got a second picture a few minutes later."

Overocker corroborated the story, as did E. L. Osborne and William Hoodless, both of whom insisted that they, too, had seen the airship. "I have lived here too long to try and fool people, I have no desire for notoriety," said McCann.

McCann also said that he had refused an offer from a Chicago newspaper to buy the negative of the photograph, and apparently handed out prints freely to all newspapermen who asked for them, though at least one of the many accounts of the incident insists that McCann was selling the prints.



Engraving from *Chicago Times-Herald*, April 12, 1897 (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)

The *Chicago Times-Herald* became an enthusiastic proponent of the McCann photographs. The paper had a pen and ink drawing made from the photo taken by the railroad tracks published on page one of the April 10 edition, along with a long story on the photograph and a recapitulation of the entire airship "craze" from its beginnings in California on November 17 of the previous year.

The *Times-Herald* also had the staff artist and etcher pronounce the photographs genuine. "It would be impossible to 'fix' a negative so as to show an object so relatively small and yet have it so perfect in the picture," said the artist.

The etcher, after testing the print with acids, said, "It is certainly a photograph of an object taken in the air. It would have been possible to cut the film in the negative before the print was made, but then there would be plainly visible a





DOES THIS EXPLAIN THOSE NOCTURNAL AERIAL APPEARANCES?

The airship was often used as a vehicle for political satire. This cartoon appeared in the *Chicago Times-Herald*, April 12, 1897. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)

aimed to prey upon the curiosity of an incredulous public to the end that shining half-dollars would pour into the big wagons where tickets for the 'big show' are sold."

By April 15 an article in the *Chicago Times-Herald* stated flatly and without any reservation that the airship was a Ringling Brothers production, and that it was hidden in the shops of the Ringlings at Baraboo, where it was still being tested and perfected. The article went on to say that the Ringlings had found the ship in the possession of a man named Carr who had gotten the original model from a New York inventor who had died a few years earlier. The Ringlings denied the whole thing, but were probably grateful for the publicity.

The airship was reported to have exploded near Kalamazoo, Michigan. A widely circulated story dated April 15 told of two "old soldiers," George W. Somers and William Chadburn, who said they had seen the lights of the airship move rapidly through space, when there was a

sudden explosion and the lights disappeared. "They declare the report to have been like that of heavy ordnance and to have been immediately succeeded by a distant sound of projectiles flying through the air."

Others reported hearing the explosion, but at the time they thought it was ordinary thunder, though there is no indication that the night was a stormy one.

The following morning a number of odd pieces of debris were found in the area in which the explosion was supposed to have taken place. There was a coil of heavy wire, and what seemed to be the point of a propeller blade made of very light material. Three men who had been shingling a barn nearby insisted that when they came to work the morning after the reported explosion the barn was peppered with small pieces of debris, some of which had been propelled by a force powerful enough for them to penetrate the wood.

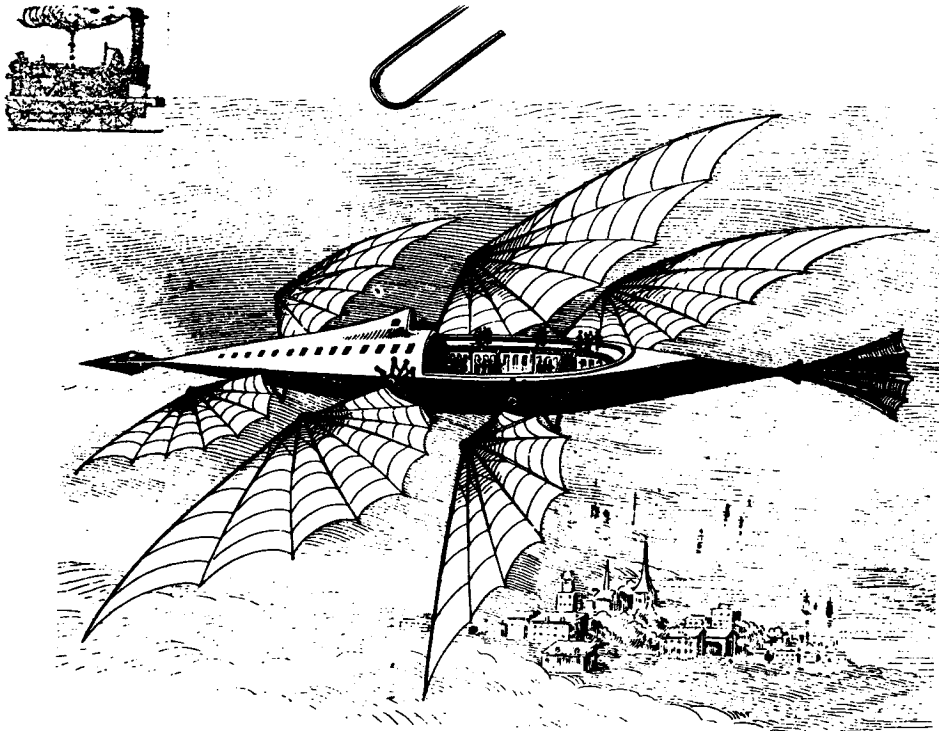
Another bit of alleged airship debris was dug up near Battle Creek, Michigan, in mid-April. A man named George Parks and his wife, from the town of Pennfield, were walking across an open field when they saw a bright light shoot across the sky. At first they thought it was just a bright meteor, but as it passed over them a piece of it fell to the ground.

Mrs. Parks, according to newspaper accounts, was so frightened of the thing that she would not let her husband go near it. But the next morning Parks and his brother Benjamin went to the spot and dug up what appeared to be a large wheel made of aluminum. The object was about three feet in diameter.

"Mr. Parks says it is the first time he ever heard of a meteor having wheels. He will keep the wheel as a memento, and it may be seen any time at his farm in Pennfield."

The present whereabouts of this alleged wheel from the air are unknown.

The airship excitement throughout the upper Midwest



Widely circulated drawing of "Edison's Airship." Edison, however, never worked on an airship and this drawing was a hoax that capitalized on the famous man's name. (Courtesy of the Mary Evans Picture Library)

story that in 1880 Edison accepted \$1,000 from New York newspaper publisher James Gordon Bennett to develop a practical flying machine. If Edison did actually accept the money (and I have seen no evidence that he did), there is certainly no indication that he actually worked on the project, and by 1897 he was professing a complete personal disinterest in airships.

The Edison letter story broke on the nineteenth of April. By the twentieth it had appeared in papers all over the country. It would probably be an exaggeration to say that the great man's debunking killed public interest in the airship, but the Edison interview was the last major burst of airship publicity.

Before the excitement ended, however, the airship achieved a degree of international fame. The French, it seems, scoffed at the airship stories, not because they were incredible, but because the airship was not French! The following article appeared in the respected French journal *Figaro*.

"The news [of the airship] seems to be more than a canard, seeing the details and preciseness in which are related in the *Herald* [European edition] the exploits of this airship. It has traveled over the new world at an average height of from 5 to 600 meters, and is stated to have been seen by thousands, and, what is more, photographed. . . .

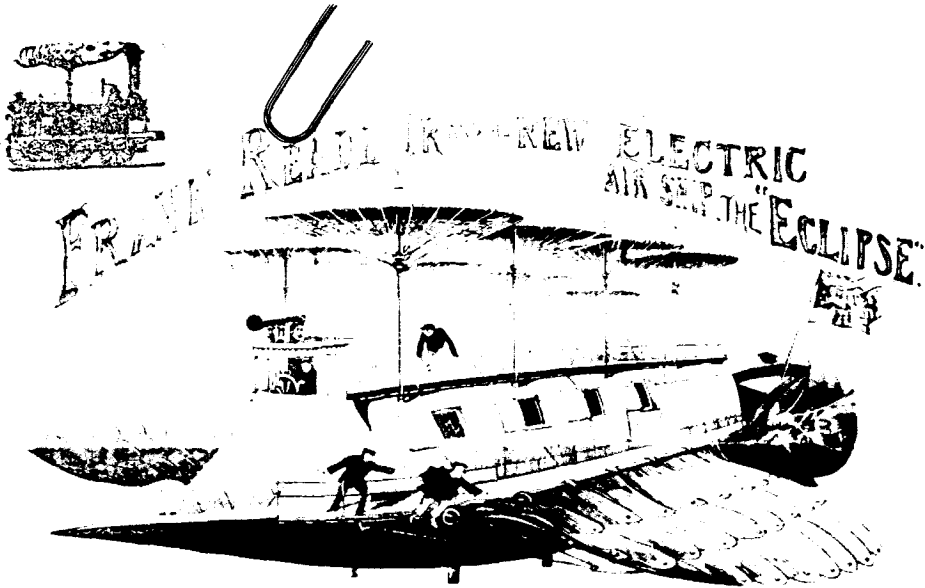
"With a telescope a human being was observed in the machine. In Chicago during the night, a searchlight flooded the city with rays, which caused in some quarters such terror that many people believed the end of the world had come.

"These statements are so astounding that one doubts their reality, notwithstanding the full details given by the *Herald*. No machine exists in France that can lift its weight by screws or any other system by one-third, without counting engineers and passengers or provisions or fuel.

"Americans are no further advanced in the science of aeronautics than the French, and to accept the statement of an airship travelling at 100 kilometers an hour we must admit the discovery of a new force or a new application of a force hitherto unknown to the extent of 3 or 4 times greater than any existing."

In an editorial the *Herald* noted:

"Even Paris has caught the airship contagion. The *Figaro* . . . publishes a special article based on the report sent from New York to the European edition of the *Herald*, which will undoubtedly furnish interest to Parisian readers for some time to come. Paris is evidently quite as anxious to get the truth about the high flier as we are, but unfortunately our



Cover from one of the Frank Reade, Jr., "Airship" books (From Penny Dreadfuls)

powered by storage batteries. Other descriptions from other places make the airship sound more like a powered dirigible than the helicopter proposed by Senarens and Verne. Electricity isn't the only motive power either; for example, anti-gravity is sometimes mentioned in accounts of the airship.

But electric-powered helicopters were not the only airships that figured in late nineteenth-century science fiction either. Lu Senarens himself had written invention stories employing the powered dirigible and regular winged planes as well as airships that operated on the helicopter principle.

The anti-gravity machine was a subject often speculated upon by writers of late nineteenth-century science fiction. Indeed, virtually every principle and accomplishment that was attributed to the mysterious airship in 1896-97 had already been given extensive treatment by the science fiction writers of the era.

Just because an idea has been used in a novel, even a novel as popular and influential as Jules Verne's *Robur*, does not automatically mean that the fiction influenced airship

witnesses in Iowa, Illinois, and Texas, or that they were even aware that such science fiction novels existed. But recently Sam Moskowitz has unearthed an almost forgotten era of early American science fiction, and his discovery does seem to have some bearing on the origins and growth of the airship excitement.

You will recall that the first major airship sightings took place in Sacramento, California, some forty miles from San Francisco, and the sightings received extensive coverage in the San Francisco newspapers. Moskowitz has discovered that the center of imaginative and vigorous science fiction writing and publishing in America during the last decades of the nineteenth century was San Francisco.

The hero of Moskowitz's researches is Robert Duncan Milne, a mechanically minded Scotsman who first drifted out to San Francisco in 1874 to attend the Mechanics Institute Fair, and stayed on to become, in Moskowitz's view, America's first full-time science fiction writer. Though he was a confirmed alcoholic whose periods of sobriety grew progressively shorter, Milne still managed to turn out an impressive body of work before he staggered in front of a cable car in December 1899 and was killed.

Milne was extremely popular in his day, and his stories were very much in demand by both West Coast literary publications and newspapers which regularly printed fiction. Many of his stories appeared first in Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*. For a time his reputation surpassed that of Ambrose Bierce and Robert Lewis Stevenson, both of whom he knew personally. But today, were it not for Moskowitz's efforts, Milne's work would be entirely forgotten, and given the rate at which old newspapers and microfilm deteriorate, much of what he wrote would probably have been lost forever.

Of course, airships were prominent in Milne's work. In his story, *A Question of Reciprocity*, which appeared in the

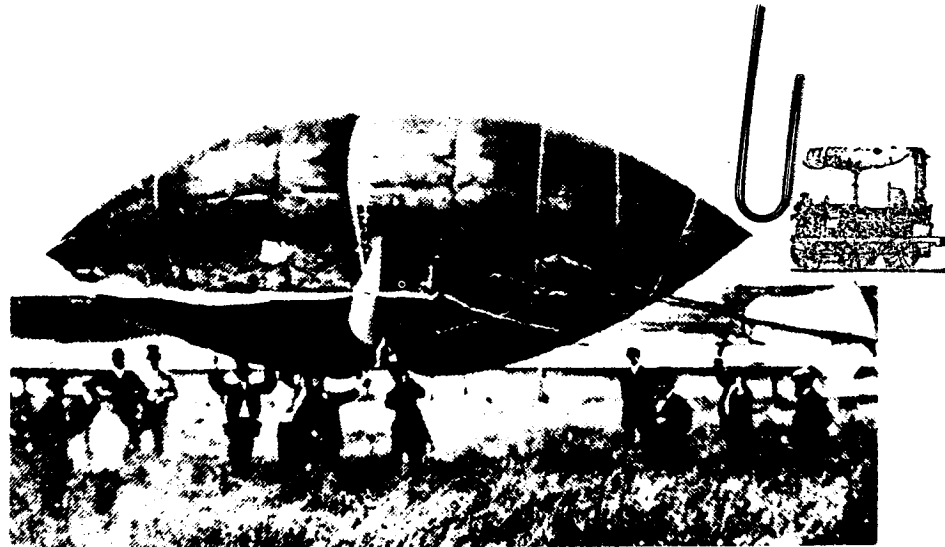
“gravitation propulsion” never caught on. He seems to have been the only one capable of mastering that form of flight, and one suspects that he was extremely lucky in never having encountered any difficult weather conditions during his flights. Despite promises, Andrews could get no money from the government to finance his flights, and plans to build more ships of the *Aereon* design finally ended when his aerial navigation company failed in the financial panic that broke out at the end of the Civil War.

An epilogue to Dr. Andrew’s aerial career was written by John Toland in his book *The Great Dirigibles*:

“The doctor returned regretfully to his practice in Perth Amboy, taking up once again his duties as Port Officer and president of the Board of Health. His dream of flying was partially fulfilled, and he thought he’d left the secret of ‘gravitational’ propulsion to posterity in his book. But since his second memorable day over the city of New York; no other man has been able to fly an airship without a motor.”

Because Dr. Andrews had received so much publicity in 1865, one wonders whether his career did not provide the spark for the rumor that the inventor of the airship came from New Jersey. That rumor circulated in California about the time the airship excitement broke out.

But Californians did not have to look all the way to New Jersey to find models for airship inventors. They had an excellent one right in their own backyard. He was Fred Marriot, an Englishman and publisher who founded the *London Illustrated News* and the *London Morning Chronicle*. Marriot migrated to San Francisco in 1856, and began publishing the *News Letter*. But his primary interest was inventing, and most particularly inventing an airship. He had already patented a steam-driven flying machine in England, but had never been able to raise enough money to build it. He seemed to feel that America, particularly the gold fields of California, would present greater opportunities. By



Fred Marriot's Avitor successfully tested in California in 1869. (From *Science Fiction in Old San Francisco*, by Sam Moskowitz)

1869 Marriot had obtained a United States patent on his invention and formed the Aerial Steam Navigation Company to finance the building and testing of the airship he called *Avitor*.

The first public test was to take place on July 3, 1869, at Shellmount Park race track. Marriot's airship was a balloon shaped like a fat cigar, and stabilized by two wings. Beneath the balloon was suspended a steam boiler which drove the propellers that powered the vehicle. Perhaps the best description of Marriot's airship appeared in John Bruce's book *Gaudy Century*:

“The wings were five feet long and came to points like those of a swallow. They were white cloth on a frame of heavy wire. At the rear was a rudder and elevator, four moveable planes set at right angles. The steam boiler and engine weighed about 34 pounds. Spirit lamps were under the boilers. There was a crank connected by cog wheels with tumbling rods that in turn went to two four-foot-long propellers. The propellers were on the wings. There were 1,360 cubic feet of hydrogen in the ‘cigar.’”

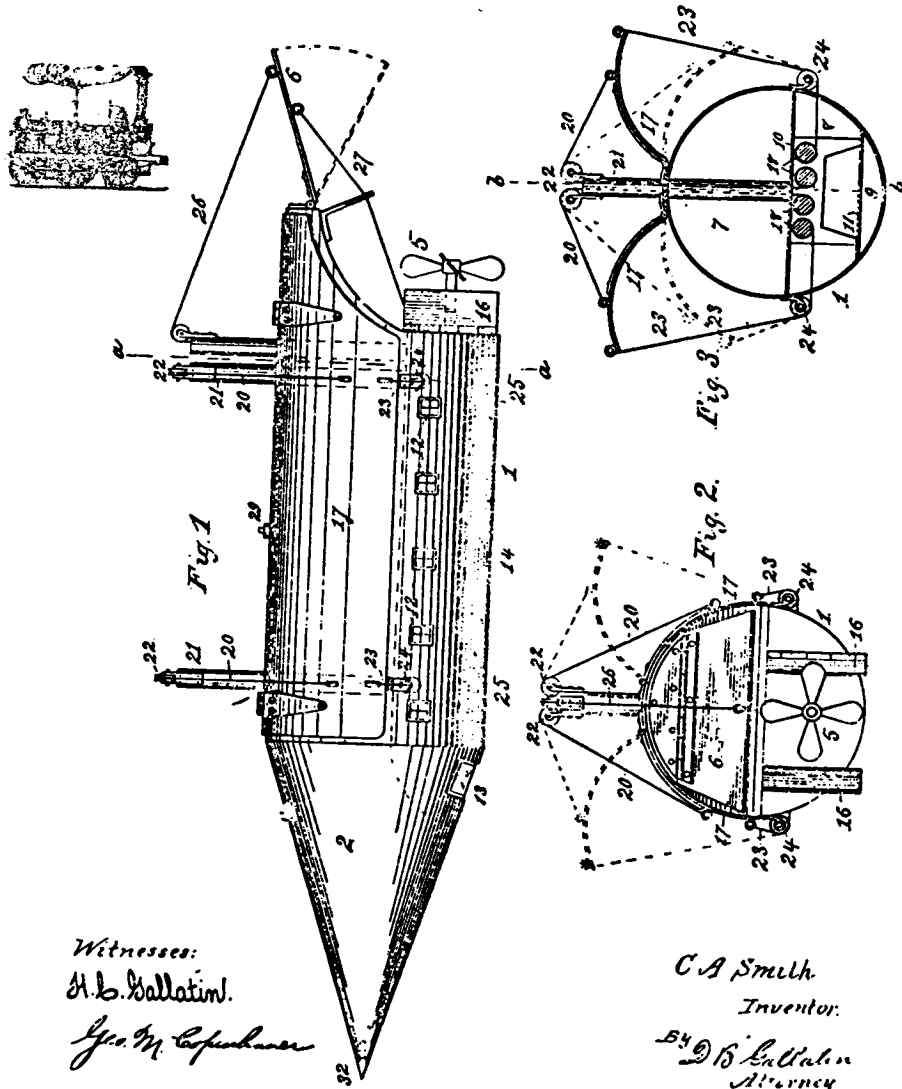
(No Model.)

C. A. SMITH.  
AIR SHIP.

2 Sheets—Sheet 1.

No. 565,806.

Patented Aug. 11, 1896.



Witnesses:  
*H. B. Ballantine*  
*Jos. M. Capshaw*

*C. A. Smith*  
 Inventor.  
*H. B. Ballantine*  
 Attorney

Airship patent granted to C. A. Smith of San Francisco on August 11, 1896. Just one of many airship patents granted during that era. (Courtesy of the U.S. Patent Office)

On May 6, Langley launched an unmanned twenty-six-pound propeller-driven model from a catapult on a houseboat on the Potomac. It flew for about a minute and a half before its fuel was exhausted and it set down gently in the water about half a mile from where it had been launched. In November 1896, Langley successfully tested a more advanced model on the eve of the start of the airship mystery. In fact, with Lilienthal's death and the Chanute and Langley experiments, flying made a lot of news in 1896 even without the mystery airship, and all of this surely helped to create an atmosphere in which the general public expected successful flight at almost any moment.

A couple of Texas inventors have occasionally been mentioned in connection with the airship mystery, probably because airship sightings were so frequent in Texas. One of these inventors, Jacob Brodbeck of Fredericksburg, Texas, has at least a local reputation for having beaten the Wright brothers to powered flight. Brodbeck was a German immigrant who taught school and tinkered with flying machine models during his time off.

Around 1865, Brodbeck began selling shares in a company that was to finance and manufacture the airplane that he had designed. Whether Brodbeck had actually flown in his invention before the stock sale is unclear—local legend says that he did. Be that as it may, his first major flight after the sale of stock was a total fiasco. Again according to local legend, Brodbeck himself was badly injured during the test and after that refused to speak to anyone about his aircraft ideas. In another version of the story, Texas investors deserted him after the crash, and thought him crazy. So Brodbeck went on the road, touring the United States, trying to raise money for his invention. One time, while speaking in Michigan, someone stole his only set of airplane plans. This was the final discouragement, and Jacob Brodbeck returned to his Texas farm where he died in 1909, undoubtedly



*One of the biggest stories of 1897 was not about airships or inventions of any kind—it was of women's hats. The ladies of the day were fond of large, feathered hats which was cause for some concern to men trying to see around the bonnets during a theater performance. Texas newspapers of the day often had stories pleading with the ladies to make some changes in the size of their headgear. This drawing appeared in the Dallas Morning News during April of 1897.*

from the beginning of time, man had watched the birds fly free and dreamed of being able to put on wings and give chase. As early as 1838, the *London Times* was occasionally running stories of a so-called airship seen in the sky above England. Shortly after gold was discovered in California in 1849, the R. Porter & Co. of New York ran huge advertisements announcing "The Aerial Locomotive." It was said to be a huge ship made of sturdy material that arrows could not puncture. There were



*Bicycles were big news in 1897 and all sorts of ideas were advanced on how the unique machines might be used. One of the best ideas came from Deputy Sheriff Josh Messenger of Sherman, Texas. He proposed transporting prisoners on the back of his "wheel" and claimed the idea was foolproof, because the prisoner would have to hang on and if he made any move to escape, the deputy would know it in time to draw his gun. There is no record that the idea ever caught on. This drawing of how Deputy Messenger's idea was supposed to work appeared in the Austin Daily Statesman.*

benches enough for fifty people and propulsion was supplied by a steam engine. The large gas bag could be refilled while en route, it was claimed, by an open bonfire on board. The Porter Aerial Locomotive never materialized, and it may have been an early newspaper airship hoax since the date the ship was to begin service was projected as April 1, 1849, better known as April Fool's Day.

**THE BEST ROUTE TO THE CALIFORNIA GOLD!**



**To Be In Operation**  
**The 1st Of April, 1849**

**THE AERIAL LOCOMOTIVE**

**R. PORTER & CO.** (Office, Room No. 40 in the Sun Building, New York) are making active progress in the construction of an *Aerial Transport*, for the express purpose of carrying passengers between New York & California.

It is expected to put this machine in operation about the 1st of April, 1849, and the transport is expected to make a trip to the gold region and back in seven days. The price of passage is \$50, including board. Books open for subscribers as above.



**Skies To Be Filled With Aerial Locomotives!**

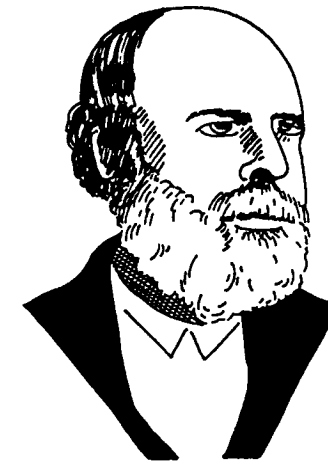
IT may be anticipated that within a few months these *aerial machines* may be soaring in various directions and at different elevations, some apparently among or above the clouds; and others, like swallows, sailing leisurely just above the surface of the earth... out over rich fields of broom and grain. Travelers soon will find themselves waving and conversing by the way with merry farmers.

CONTACT AS NOTED

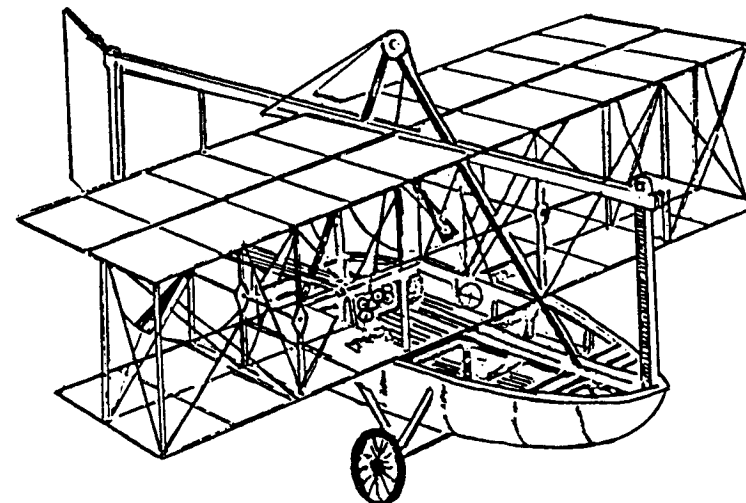
**R. PORTER & COMPANY**

An early airship advertisement that may have been an April Fool's Day joke. Courtesy of the Mutual UFO Network.

There were more strange sights in the heavens about the time of the Civil War. On September 20, 1865, five months after Lee surrendered, a German immigrant living near San Antonio actually did manage to fly. Jacob Brodbeck's flying marvel was powered by a spring which turned a shaft. His first flight covered fifty yards and he managed an altitude of twenty-five feet. Although there were several witnesses to his first flight and additional flights he made over a number of years, he has been denied his rightful place in history as the pilot of the first mechanical airship. He died virtually unknown in Luckenbach, Texas in 1910.



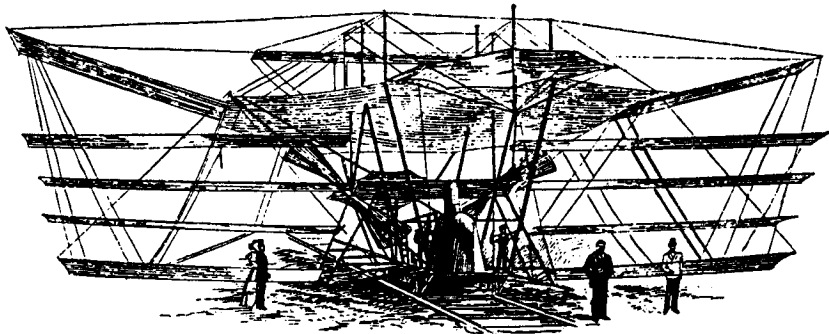
*Jacob Brodbeck, as recreated from an old newspaper drawing.*



A drawing of the spring loaded aeroplane that Jacob Brodbeck supposedly flew successfully near San Antonio in 1865. Before his death in 1910, Brodbeck is said to have made more than seventy successful flights.

During the early 1890s most of the airship stories centered around balloons. In 1892, when Russian troops massed in Warsaw, Poland for maneuvers, they were watched carefully by German troops hovering overhead in large balloons. Using a bright spotlight powered by a battery, the Germans were even able to keep tabs on the Russians at night. The Russians, convinced the balloons were spy vehicles, opened fire. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your point of view, the balloons were high enough to be effectively out of range of the crude Russian weapons.

There were occasional reports that various inventors, such as Edison, were working feverishly to solve the aerial navigation problem. But other than some successful balloon flights and the fanciful words of Jules Verne, little actual progress had been made. Opinion as to whether or not the problem would ever be solved ranged from a certainty that it would, to the more popular stance that if God had intended man to fly he would have given him wings. The truth is that in 1897 a lot of people were still marveling that they could travel so much easier by rail than they had by stagecoach just a few years earlier.



*A year before the great airship mystery in the United States, American Hiram Maxim went to England to construct and fly an airship. With the assistance of a mechanical genius, a corps of skilled workmen, a perfect workshop, and lots of money, he was able to build the ship pictured above. And it almost worked. An accident on takeoff during the initial test flight damaged the machine so it was repaired for another trial. After several misfires, Maxim gave up in despair*

Another invention that wasn't all that new in 1897 was, nevertheless, becoming an integral part of life in America. As the United States closed in on a new century, telegraph wires were the sutures that held the nation together as one country. The lines reached out and brought the world to the smallest town, and a virtual explosion of information availability was gripping the nation. Then, shortly before the first airship was seen in Texas, the trans-Atlantic cable was completed, joining the continents. That monumental achievement was, to 19th century Americans, what seeing live pictures from the moon was to their 20th century descendants. And by 1897 there was some talk that a wireless telegraph was just around the corner.

Other than information companies like Western Union, the one industry which benefitted most from telegraph advancements was the newspaper business. By 1897 virtually every newspaper of any size had its own telegraph line, and stories were exchanged hourly by papers all over the nation. Unlike the old days, before telegraph, newspaper patrons could read about events only a few days after they happened instead of a few weeks or months. It was absolutely amazing to those '97 Texans that they could read about what happened in New York or Paris or Greece only a couple of days earlier. It must have been the 1897 equivalent of seeing pictures on the 10:00 o'clock news of stories that had just happened.

Despite the advantage of the telegraph, newspapers in 1897 were not all that sophisticated. In fact, by today's standards, '97 newspapers were downright crude, and much of what was printed was virtually worthless. News items like: Mr. Jones of San Antonio was in town yesterday; the weather yesterday was exceedingly hot; or the stars were not visible last night due to heavy clouds, served little or no purpose other than to fill space around advertisements.

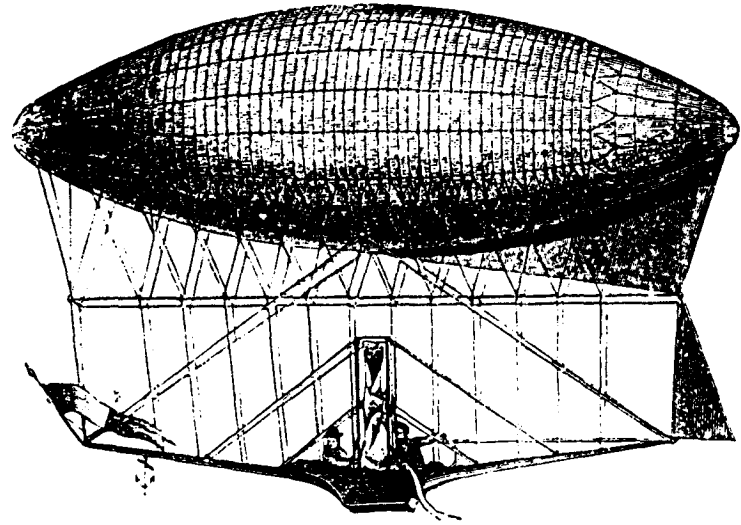
Thanks to the telegraph, papers relied on wire stories for the vast amount of their news. Most papers of the period had only one or no more than two reporters, but a much larger editorial staff was assigned to weed through the vast amount of information received over the wire to decide what to print and what to throw away. In addition to relying on wire stories, every



paper in Texas maintained a large staff of "stringers," or local correspondents. All the major papers and most of the smaller ones had part-time representatives in virtually every other Texas city or town. The responsibility of these stringers was to sniff out local news and then telegraph the story to the main office. Although somewhat crude and often ineffective, this network of local correspondents accounted for a vast majority of the news items that filled the papers of Texas in 1897.

Another source for news items was the personal letter submitted for consideration by concerned or interested citizens. Unlike today's "Letters to the Editor," citizens in 1897 actually submitted stories in the form of letters and expected them to be printed as news. Such stories were even less reliable than those contributed by stringers, but the papers did get some news value at absolutely no cost. And cost was certainly a consideration since yearly subscriptions in those days amounted to no more than \$5.00, and that was often on credit.

Because newspapers relied on wire stories, local correspondents, or average citizens for the bulk of their news, there was usually little chance to verify the information. There was no such thing as investigative reporting and there was very little follow-up on the material presented. Instead, the stories were presented in more of a "take it or leave it, believe it or don't" format. Tag lines like "as we understand," "as it was reported," "according to our correspondent," or "local gossip has it" were common in the papers of the day. As a result, much of what



The illustration above and on the following page are all 1890s vintage newspaper drawings of proposed "flying machines." As far as is known, none of them ever actually flew.

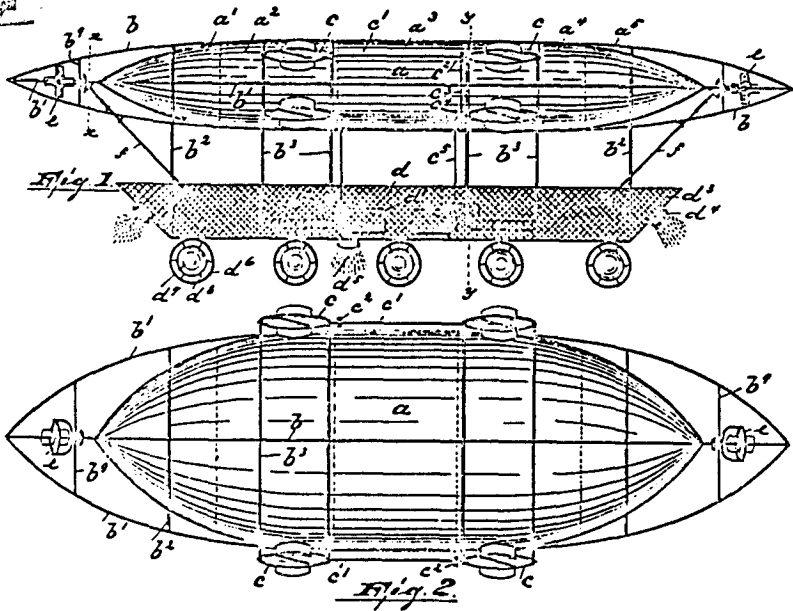
(No Model.)

D. HURLBUT.  
AIR SHIP.

3 Sheets—Sheet 1.

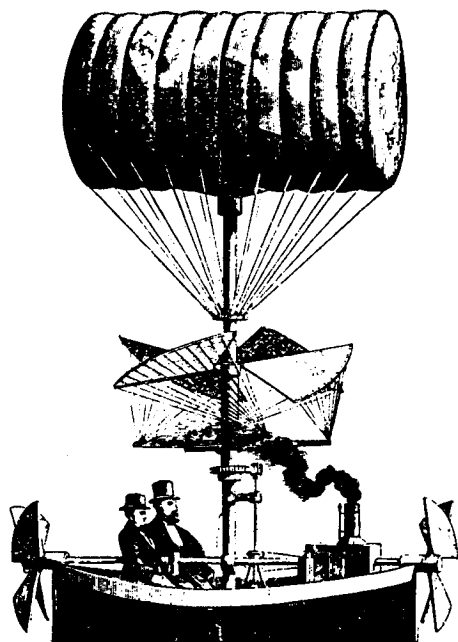
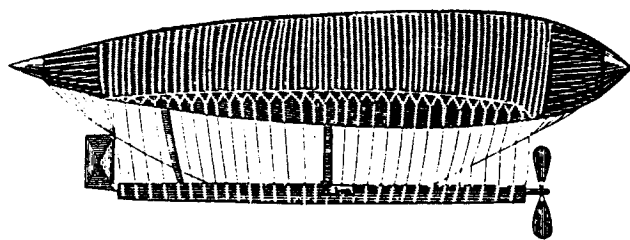
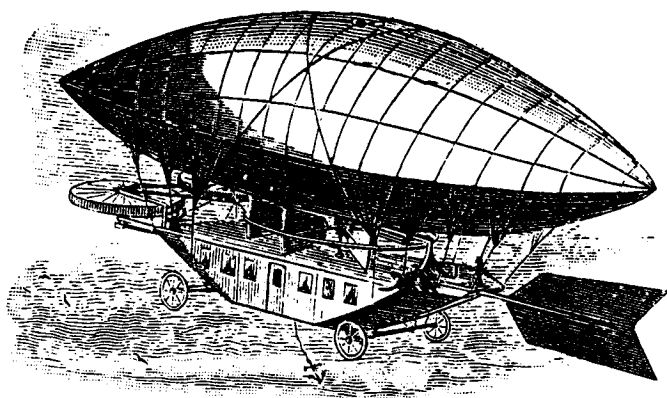
No. 526,394.

Patented Sept. 25, 1894.

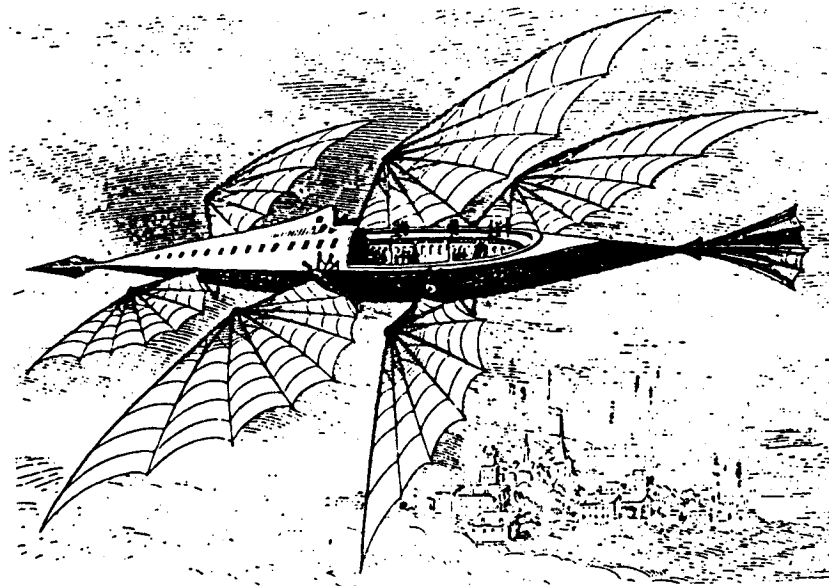


WITNESSES: *Henry C. Bonding*  
*Wm. S. Nell*  
INVENTOR: *Duane Hurlbut*  
BY *Gartner & Co*  
ATTORNEYS

On September 25, 1894, a Mr. D. Hurlbut received a patent on his airship design. There is no record that the machine ever made a successful flight.



appeared in the papers has to be viewed as highly suspect from a reliability standpoint. So bad was the reporting in those days that some stories are sufficiently suspect as to make one wonder how they ever got printed in the first place. But for all their faults, the papers were the best, and about the only source of information for an 1897 American public that was growing hungrier almost by the day for more information.



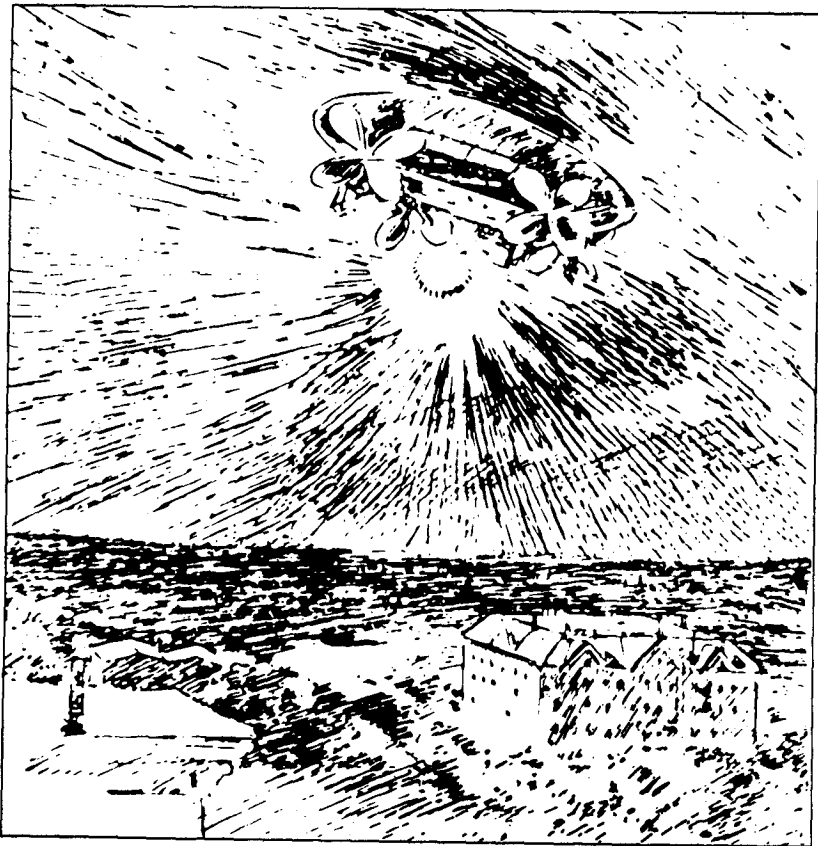
*This drawing, widely circulated in 1897, was said to be of an airship designed by Thomas Edison. However, there is no record to substantiate the claim or suggest that Edison ever did actually work on an airship.*

The lack of ability to verify the stories also led directly to a new phenomenon called the newspaper hoax. Occasionally, the newspaper staff invented stories to see what would happen. More often than not, however, the hoaxer was a private individual out to fool the world with some tantalizing story that had no more substance than smoke in a bottle. It was, remember, the "Gay 90s" and practical jokes, often at the expense of the newspapers, were the order of the day. In some instances the stories were so good and believable that it was obvious that



me. I don't understand it. It might be that aerial travel has been accomplished. It seems as strange and improbable as were the inventions of the telephone, phonograph and the electric power applied to streetcars."

Unlike the day of the original sightings, on November 22 the airship, or apparition as it was sometimes referred to in the west coast press, did not confine its flying to Sacramento. It was also reportedly seen by hundreds of people as it sailed along through the heavens over the San Francisco Bay area. In 'Frisco, as in Sacramento, the majority of the sightings were of a brilliant, arc-type light, and there seemed to be a lot of trolley men



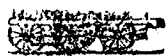
A drawing of the California airship that was widely circulated during 1896. Although it appeared in several newspapers around the nation, it was not

involved in the reports, which just added to the possibility of the "car barn conspiracy."

One person who did not have a thing to do with the trolley car service but who did make an airship report was San Francisco Mayor Sutro Hughes. Even though the mayor did not personally witness the phenomenon, he did faithfully report what his servants had seen. According to Hughes, his domestic help had seen a bright light sail in from over the Pacific Ocean about 500 feet above the ground. As the object traveled over the beach, it could be seen that there were actually two lights and some sort of "misty-looking mass" above it. As the object neared the mayor's residence, it supposedly cast out a strong beam of light perhaps 500 feet in length. Although his honor speculated that while the beam might have seemed that long, it was probably much shorter. Mayor Hughes was emphatic that his servants would not try to tell him some fanciful ghost story and that they saw just what they described. He concluded, "I certainly think some shrewd inventor has solved the problem of aerial navigation and that we will hear about it in a short time."

Of all the numerous San Francisco sightings none was more interesting than the report of the airship sailing over Cliff House, a seaside mansion for the rich and powerful of California society. Supposedly, as the ship sailed over Seal Rocks on the beach near the mansion, its bright light was cast upon the sleeping seals below causing them to awake and dive into the sea for cover. Although it was not specifically stated, the implication was that the light was not naturally occurring, for if it had been, the seals would not have been aroused from their sleep.

There is, however, one major complication to the sightings in Sacramento and San Francisco. Even though newspaper reports of the two events are inconclusive as to the exact time of occurrence, it appears the sightings were at approximately the same time, just after sunset. Because of the distance involved, it was speculated that perhaps there was more than one object navigating the heavens. The complication of the airship being seen in two (or more) places at the same moment would be repeated throughout the California, Midwest, and Texas sightings.



After November 22 the range of the mysterious airship was dramatically increased. Two days later it was sighted in Tacoma, Washington; San Jose, California; and numerous smaller towns. On November 25 it was seen east of Los Angeles and at Oakland, 400 miles away, at about the same moment. Before the airship moved east it would be seen all up and down the California coast, as well as in Washington, Oregon, and western Canada.



Another newspaper depiction of the California flying machine. Although the shape in this drawing appears to resemble a cigar, the person who claimed to have seen the machine said it looked like a canoe.

The putative airship presented the California print media with the same dilemma it would later cause in Texas. Essentially the problem was to print or not to print the fantastic stories. Literally hundreds of reports of firsthand sightings poured into the California papers, and there would have been no problem if only someone had stepped forward, identified himself as the inventor of the ship, and produced the craft for public inspection. It never happened.

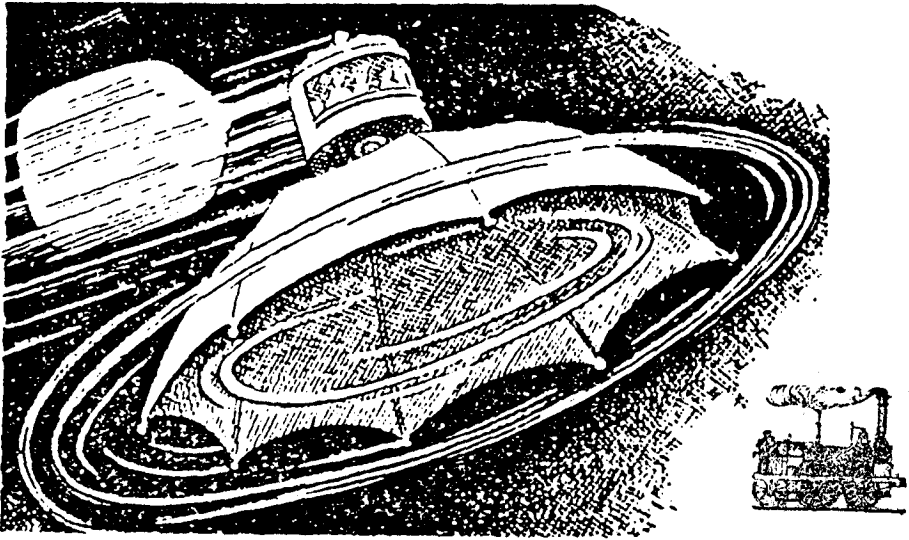
While most California newspapers ultimately contained some mention of the mystery craft, the larger papers settled into one of two classes, either pro-airship or anti-airship. The *San Francisco Call* was the unquestioned champion of the pro-airship papers. The *Call* often carried banner front page headlines informing the public of the progress of the airship. The stories and interviews with witnesses were frequently enhanced by dramatic drawings. Always, it seemed the *Call* would land the most provocative stories that were skewed

toward the sensational. With history in proper perspective, it is difficult not to speculate that perhaps the *Call* was a bit overzealous in its pursuit of what the editors might have perceived as the hottest news story to come along in years. There is the possibility that some of the *Call* stories were a result of its coverage rather than a result of actual sightings. It should not be forgotten that in the 1890s, as well as the 1990s, people simply loved to get their names in the paper. In California, during late November and early December of 1896, the best way to accomplish that may have been to send an airship story to the *San Francisco Call*.

At the opposite end of the airship reporting spectrum was William Randolph Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*. Although Hearst himself was certainly no stranger to sensationalized journalism, the *Examiner* refused to enter the airship reporting derby. The first mention of the airship in the *Examiner* was on November 23 when the paper printed an article refuting the whole affair. The story was in response to one that appeared in the *Call* about employees of a rail line having seen an airship. The *Examiner* quoted a superintendent of the line as saying that only a light was seen and that no one considered for a moment that what they saw was an airship.

Attacks on the airship story continued in the *Examiner* over the next several days. The editors ran stories under headlines such as "Probably Due To Liquor" or "The Result of Beer." The cartoonist for the *Examiner*, James Swinnerton, produced a series of drawings with the clear implication being that anyone connected with the airship was "nuts." One cartoon depicted a sad sea serpent and accompanied a story under the headline, "The Sea Serpent Has Drawn in His Horns and His Nose is Out of Joint." The *Examiner* believed the legendary sea serpent had been unceremoniously replaced by the airship as the world's foremost hoax. That opinion would soon be echoed by some newspapers in Texas.

The single most bizarre report from California came courtesy of a young attorney named George D. Collins. As the story was told, for several weeks prior to the November 17 sighting, Collins had mentioned to some friends that he had an eccentric



Anton Pallardy of Nebraska claimed he built the mysterious airship and that it actually looked more like an umbrella than a cigar. No other witness ever claimed to have seen an umbrella-shaped airship.

newspaper reports. In March a large number of sightings were reported throughout Kansas, a fact that did not escape the attention of many Texas editors. One Kansas report that was actually printed in a Denver, Colorado paper claimed the ship, carrying a blood-red light, had been seen over four different Kansas towns and that two hundred men in Topeka were prepared to swear that aerial navigation had been accomplished. The report also stated that many residents of the Sunflower State were so frightened by the strange light that they took to their cyclone cellars for protection.

As the airship sightings continued, so did the strange stories that followed. A black minister in Omaha proclaimed the mystery flyer was a prophet bearing news of the impending end of the world. Another man expressed the opinion that x rays could be used to communicate with and, if need be, destroy the airship. He did not explain how either could be accomplished. The references to liquor also continued. The *Kansas City Times* claimed that residents of Bellevue had seen airships "floating

in the circumambient ether" even though Kansas was a prohibition state. That same paper suggested, "Those citizens of Kansas towns who have seen a strange-looking airship sailing over their heads with voices issuing from it should swear off at once."

One of the most interesting stories was the report that the airship had passed over the Kansas state capitol at Topeka and it was seen by a number of people including Governor Leedy, his private secretary, and Harold T. Chase, editor of the *Topeka Capital* newspaper. The governor was quoted as saying, "This is a very strange light. I don't know what it is, but I hope it will solve the railroad problem. If it is an airship, maybe it will." Obviously the state leader was wishing for some relief against the economic blackmail orchestrated by often ruthless railroad investors. Unfortunately, Governor Leedy was long since dead and buried before air travel did, in fact, break the back of the railroads. As for the editor, he said the light did not have the shape or the color of a planet or star. He said it was very large, oblong-shaped, and the color of blood.

Not everyone had the governor's optimism. The *Atchison (Kansas) Daily Globe* reported: "It is not surprising that some people believe that an airship is floating about the country: some people believe in spiritualism, occultism, etc. So many people believe in miracles that charlatans advertise in the newspapers to perform them. A man who believes that a fortune teller can take a pack of cards and tell his past and future has a perfect right to believe that an airship is floating about the country at night."

The day after that story was printed, more airship stories appeared in the paper and the editor of the *Daily Globe* caught what he believed to be a fatal flaw. He wrote, "The airship fake is the best that has been sprung for years. They always make it appear at night, and then at such a height that it cannot be investigated. But then the newspapers will have to be careful, as it was 'seen' last night at two different places 75 miles distant at almost the same moment." The editor obviously believed the newspapers themselves were staging a gigantic hoax.

Stories in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Post*, and the *Detroit Evening News* all pronounced the photograph a total fake. Experts at the *Tribune* and *Post* proclaimed that McCann had doctored the negative to make it look like there was an airship in the picture while the representative at the *Evening News* maintained McCann had used a four-foot model of an airship to rig the photo.

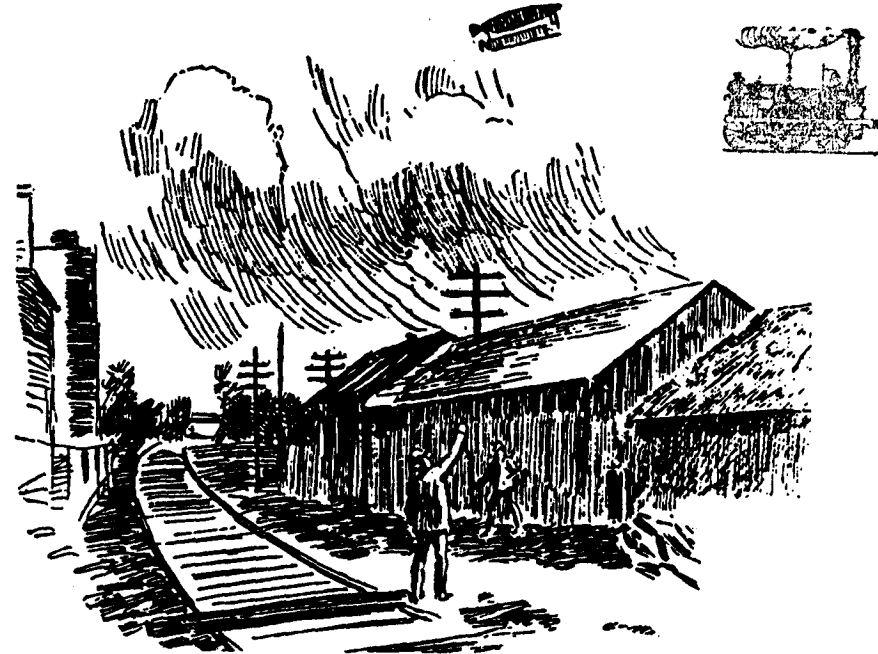
Since there was only one negative and that remained in the possession of McCann, it's hard to imagine what evidence the other papers used, and it's difficult not to surmise that some professional jealousy might have been involved. That possibility is perhaps enhanced by the fact that the description of the famous photo used in the other papers seemed to vary dramatically from the genuine article. One paper suggested the photograph even included a likeness of McCann and the camera used to take the picture but there was no explanation of how a camera could take a photo of itself. Perhaps the photo debunkers should themselves be debunked, and such might be possible if not for the fact that the original negative of the McCann photo has not been located. It is also curious that none of the alleged copies handed out by the photographer have ever surfaced. The only evidence that remains is the crude drawing that appeared in the *Times Herald* and that is not sufficient to make a definitive decision. Despite a raging controversy in the north, not one word of McCann or his famous picture ever appeared in any Texas newspaper.

While the experts in Chicago continued to argue over the possible validity of the McCann photograph, the airship sightings continued in other parts of the country. More and more reports came in from Kansas and Missouri. There were also new sightings in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Colorado, and Indiana. And while the reports continued, so did the skepticism over the failure of the airship inventor to come forward and stake his claim to immortality.

As the story continued, yet another part of the mystery began to surface, that being the obvious airship fakes. From Nebraska came the report that one man had been flying kites to purposely fool people into thinking they were seeing an airship. From

Minneapolis came the story that a young boy, who was never named, had fooled the public by sending up small, cigar-shaped balloons with lanterns attached to simulate the airship he had read about in the paper. If that is what happened, the plan worked to perfection because hundreds in Minneapolis reported seeing the mysterious ship.

There was, however, a significant problem with the stories of the contrived fakes. In most cases, the reports were carried by newspapers that could be classed as anti-airship. And there is little evidence that any investigative work was done to verify that the fakes were, indeed, fakes. In actuality, the anti-airship papers were probably quicker to print "fake" stories than pro-airship papers were to print supposedly true stories. The net result of such a situation is that it is difficult to decide what should be believed and what should not. One point perhaps



The drawing of the Walter McCann photograph which appeared in the *Chicago Times-Herald*. The original of the photograph has never been found.

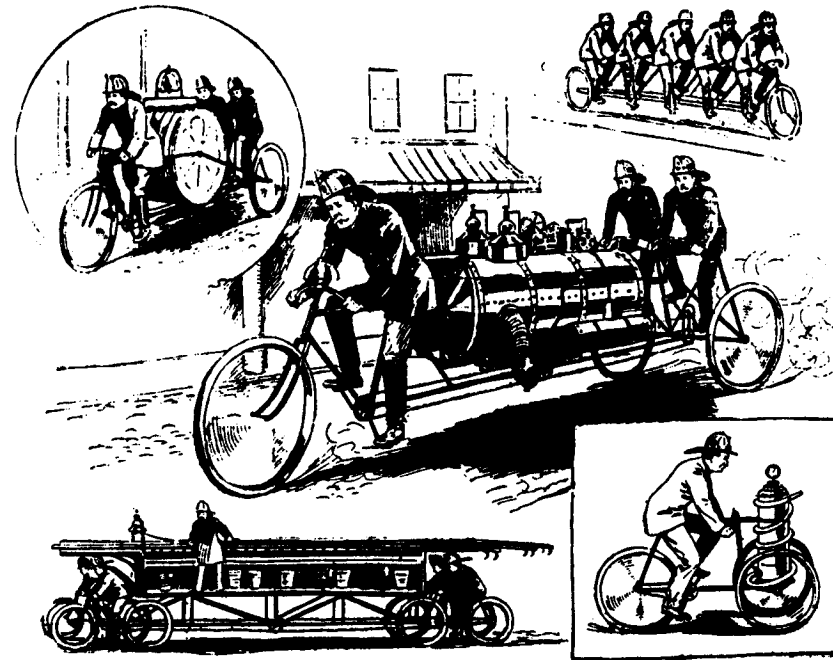
here, just let him shoot me between the eyes and end my misery." As it turned out, The Kid was somewhat short in the friend department because no one came to his rescue. Cramer suffered until 6:00 p.m. the following day, despite repeated requests for someone, anyone, to go ahead and kill him. As for Walker, plenty of witnesses testified he acted in self-defense, and the Kid himself, with his dying words, pleaded that no one go to jail for the killing. No charges were ever filed in the case.

On March 24, the day after the Kid died, something strange happened in the skies over Texas although it was not reported as an airship. Many people in Brenham reported that a large meteor was seen passing over the city. As it reached a point halfway between the zenith of its path and the horizon, the meteor appeared to explode but no sound of an explosion was heard. Following the explosion, a thin cloud of white smoke or "a small cloud" was seen in the sky for about ten minutes. The meteor was described by several people who saw it as "a bright ball of fire, burning with a bright light in front and leaving a bluish white tail in its wake."

Supposedly, the meteor was also seen at Marlin, Galveston, Melborne, and Huntsville. Some of those witnesses reported hearing a strange rumbling sound, much like that of a train engine, as the meteor passed over head. Since meteors don't normally make rumbling noises, one of the news stories ended with a simple statement: "An explanation of the phenomenon would prove of interest."

The meteor reports were very strange. In fact, if "airship" had been substituted for "meteor," the stories, without the part about an explosion, would have been similar to the tales of the mystery flyer in the Midwest. It does not take much imagination to conclude that had Texas newspapers been running stories about alleged airships instead of alleged submarines, the Brenham meteor might very well have been reported as a flying machine.

A couple of days after the meteor sighting, the *Galveston News* printed another peculiar story under the headline "Phenomenon of the Heavens/ Strange Appearance and Disappearance of Three Lights." According to the story, following a strong thunderstorm on March 28, 1897, near Colesnell, Texas, three



*In 1897 a Racine, Wisconsin firm tried to market a line of bicycle-powered fire fighting equipment to replace the horse drawn variety. The machines never panned out, probably because on its worst day, a horse could still pull a fire wagon to the top of a hill better than a man could pedal one.*

strange lights were seen in the heavens. One large light and two smaller ones were grouped in a pattern. Intermittently, for several minutes, each of the lights seemed to alternate between being bright and then fading while another brightened. Then suddenly they were gone. The *Galveston News* speculated the lights resulted when a concentration of electricity on the earth caused stars to shine brighter than usual. Obviously, whoever wrote that wasn't quite up on his astronomy. Either that or he didn't believe stars are millions of miles away. In any event, there wasn't even the slightest hint that the lights might have been from an airship.

About the time of the meteor sightings, many Texas newspapers carried the first reports of what could be expected at the

Great Exposition that was to be held at Paris, France in 1900. One of the future attractions was said to be a "city in the air." Supposedly, a giant balloon would actually lift the city above the exposition grounds and people would lounge around as if they were at home. Although details of the balloon were not released, it most certainly would have to be the largest balloon ever created and the largest flying object ever seen. It's not hard to understand why Texas papers would print the story of a French flying city and ignore stories of one small American flying machine.



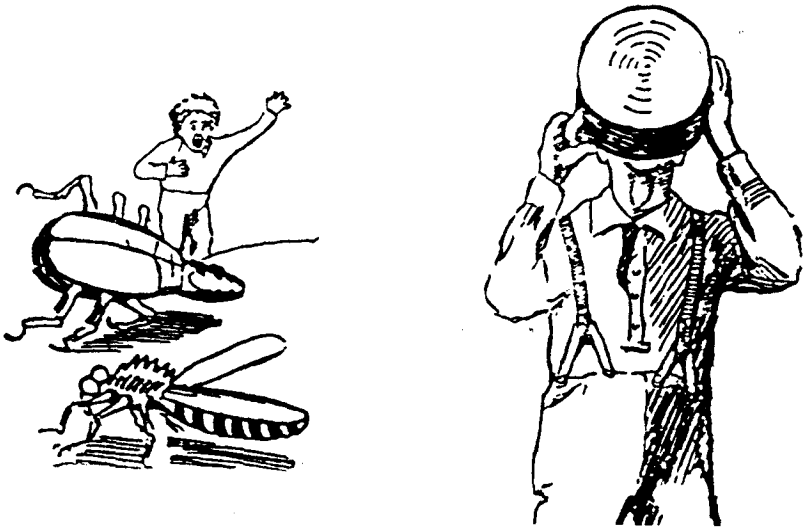
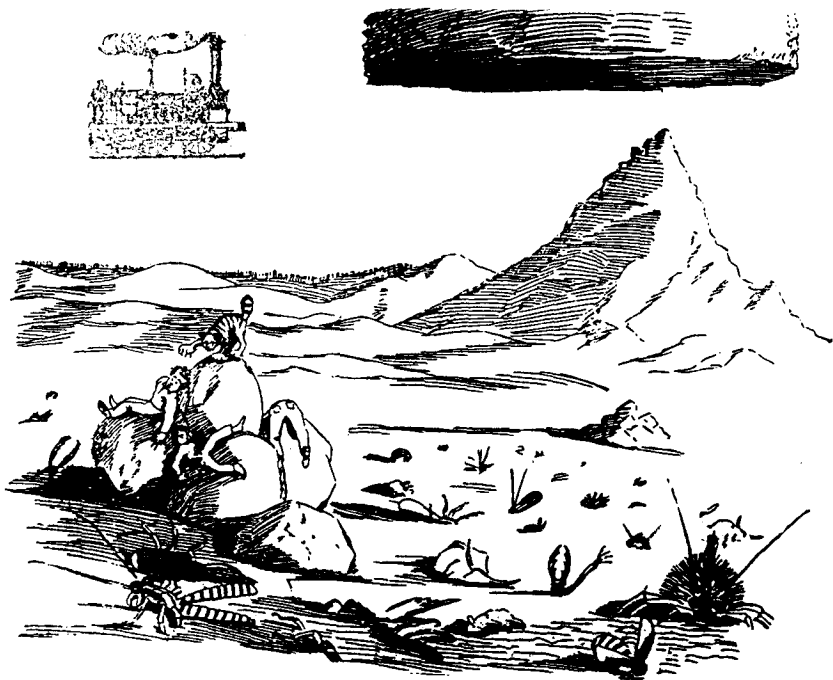
An artist's view of what the Paris Exposition would look like with a floating

Herr Arthur Stentzel of Berlin, Germany also managed to upstage the American airship with a machine which, according to most Texas newspapers, would fly like a bird. As the story was told, it had long been "the aim of the flying machine enthusiast to construct something that would practically be the prototype of a bird. Therein, it has been firmly believed, lies the secret of locomotion through the air." That hypothesis inspired Stentzel, who built a machine with two large wings that "resembles a giant bird more than anything else." The inventor claimed he could use the device to fly through the air for four or five minutes and then alight safely. Since no mortal man could power the machine with brute strength alone, the airship was also fitted with a motor, designed and patented by Stentzel, that was powered by compressed carbolic acid gas.



The Stentzel flying bird. This drawing, done from an actual photograph, was widely circulated in Texas newspapers. Although experts predicted the machine would work, there is no record that it actually flew.





The Dallas Morning News prepared the drawing (top) for the giant bug story. The smaller drawing (above left) was intended to show the relative size of the "monsters." When the hoax was uncovered, the editors quickly added the drawing (above right) to show where the story had originated.

which had been pulled off successfully. The longest such article appeared in the March 30, 1897, edition of the *Topeka Daily Capital*. A professor of mathematics was asked to comment on the possibilities of airships. He replied, "I think that the papers must have been short of copy, and found a good subject to write up and proceeded to make a readable article."

The article went on to remind readers of famous newspaper hoaxes of the past, such as when the *New York Herald* caused a near panic by printing, as a joke, that most of the animals of the New York Zoo had escaped and were roaming the streets.

Then there was the story about the time, in 1890, when Baron Rothschild was supposedly convicted of a crime and sentenced to a date with the guillotine. The Baron, so the story went, offered a reward of one million florins to any man who would substitute for him at the beheading. A group of men formed a coalition and then drew lots. The loser lost his head while his friends split the reward. It was a great story but there wasn't a word of truth in it.

Another tale in the *Daily Capital* story struck a little closer to home. The paper reported: "One of the most notable fakes of recent years was reported by a Dallas, Texas newspaper man at the time of the proposed Fitzsimmons-Corbet fight. He printed a story that the Prince of Wales was coming over for the mill. Only an official denial under the signature of Albert Edward himself stopped the story — not, however, until it had spread over the entire civilized world."

On April 6, 1897, seven days after the Topeka story appeared and less than two weeks after the giant bug fiasco, the staff of the *Dallas Morning News* decided to once again roll the credibility dice when they printed a small story about a man from Denison, Texas who had seen "a brilliantly illuminated airship." The man, who was not identified, had seen the ship while on business at South McAlester up in the Indian Territory. Although no description was given of the large airship, the man said he heard a peculiar "swishing" sound as it passed a quarter of a mile from earth. The story, the first ever about the mysterious airship to appear in a Texas paper, concluded: "The

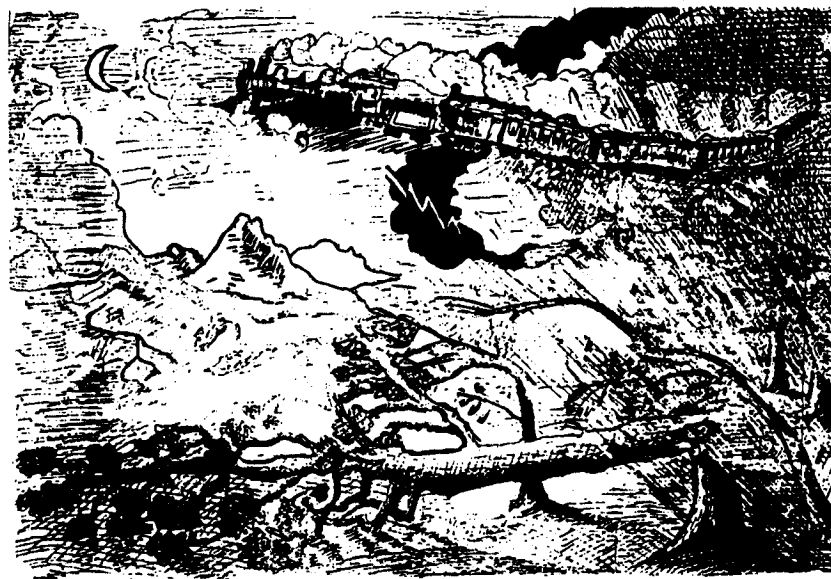
gentleman is a Mason and a K. of P. (Knight of Pythias) and his reputation for truth is beyond question."

Exactly why the *News* selected this one story to break the airship editorial ice is not known. There is also another mystery about this particular dispatch. The story was also published the same day in the *Kansas City Times* which meant it must have traveled over the telegraph wires as a regular dispatch. However, when printed, there were some obvious differences in the stories. The *Times* version clearly identified the Texan from Denison as one James Coughlan, a longtime employee of the Fidelity Insurance Company. If the wire stories were the same, and they almost certainly were, then why did the *Morning News* elect to omit the name of the witness? It is one of those airship editorial decisions that remains a puzzle.

The motive for selecting the South McAlester story to be the first printed in Texas is equally puzzling. Perhaps the fact that the Denison traveler was supposedly the first Texan to see the airship was sufficient incentive to print the story. If that's correct, then why not name the man for credibility? Another explanation might be that the *News* staff recognized that the mysterious aerial wanderer had charted a southbound course and Texas, being south of Indian Territory, might very well be in the flight path. Regardless of the motives and reasons and despite the fact that no other Texas paper picked up the story at the time, the *Dallas Morning News* coverage of the Oklahoma incident meant the shutout of airship stories was finally broken.

There was, however, a difference between printing a story and believing it. Some evidence suggests that the *News* editors, like their counterparts at papers around the state, still believed the airship stories to be a hoax. The day after the Denison man's story ran, the editorial page of the *News* included this little tidbit of information: "It is now explained that the airship which the people of Kansas saw recently was nothing more than a flock of wild geese going north. It is remarkable that the Kansans did not recognize them." Whether this story was presented primarily as dig against airships or against Kansas will never be known, but either way the message was clear, there was no such thing as an airship.

One most unusual newspaper airship story of early April was not actually a story, it was an advertisement accompanied by a strange drawing. The ad was placed in the *Dallas Daily Times Herald* by C. L. Mistrot, a sort of pioneer mass merchandiser in North Texas, and it ran under the headline "That Aerial Train." The picture depicted a flying train, nicknamed Hurricane, sailing through the air in the midst of a storm. The object of the advertisement was to alert potential buyers that Mistrot, the cash merchant, was at the controls of the train that was bringing special bargains to Dallas and Fort Worth.



A drawing of the C. L. Mistrot "Aerial Train" that appeared in the April 5, 1897, issue of the *Dallas Times Herald*.

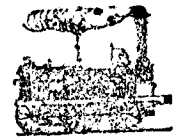
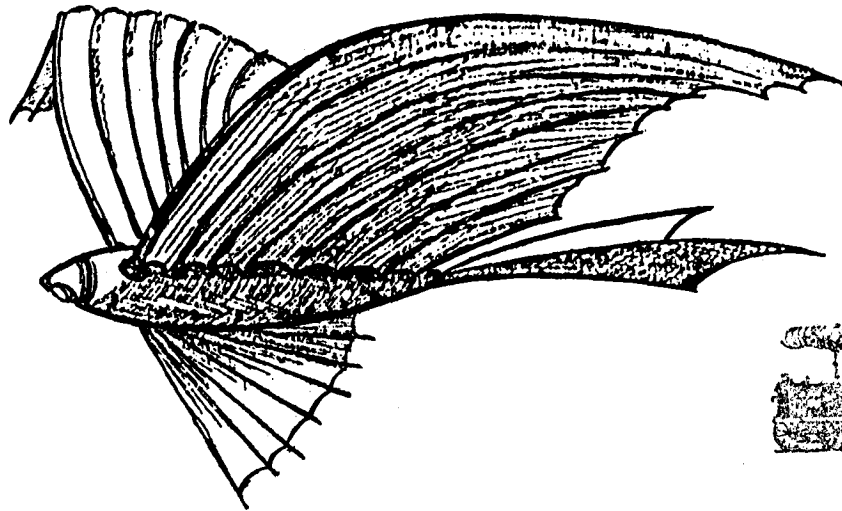
The long story which accompanied the picture was a sort of rambling political statement claiming that the new McKinley administration would bring gloom and doom to Texas by closing the possibility of freedom of trade with the Dingley tariff bill. Mistrot proclaimed that during McKinley's four-year "rule" in America there would be higher prices on just about all kinds of goods but that he would keep his merchandise train above the clouds and continue to provide merchandising at fair prices.

Frost down on West Third Avenue all said they saw it. One witness, who was emphatic about what he had seen, said it was a bright light about the size of a water bucket moving very fast toward the south. A Dr. Wills was equally emphatic that what he saw was certainly not a meteor on the grounds that the light was intermittent, appearing to come and go. Unfortunately, the object, or whatever it was, was too far from the earth for the doctor or any other witness to see anything as to its form or shape.

Approximately thirty minutes later, at about 9 p.m., the airship was seen by many people 100 miles to the northwest at Weatherford. One of the witnesses was a newspaper stringer who sent the story to both the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Austin Daily Statesman* but he failed to include any details or a description. He simply said the airship which had been seen in Oklahoma had made its way to Weatherford.

It is possible the airship skirted Dallas before circling back to Weatherford. On April 17, three days after the fact, Albert Webber, who was said to be a scientist, reported: "On Wednesday night (April 14) my wife saw a peculiar object in the heavens. At first she thought it was an illuminated balloon but soon discovered that it was not balloon-shaped and that it sailed with a motion like that of a bird. It had two great lights and was traveling southward. It wasn't a meteor, it wasn't a balloon, it wasn't a ball of fire — I guess it must have been an airship."

A Mr. Dunlap, night chief operator of the Texas and Pacific Union depot relay office at Cresson, provided a better description. Although he failed to include a time of sighting, Dunlap said the airship, apparently sixty feet long, resembled the top of a passenger coach in shape, long and pointed at the ends, with a powerful searchlight in the front end, and several smaller lights on the sides. It had wings on it, he said, something like that of a bat. Dunlap, who swore he was sober, said, "This is dead straight. I am now convinced that there is something in this airship business, for several prominent citizens of this locality also saw the ship."



*This drawing of the airship seen at Weatherford, Texas appeared in the April 16, 1897 edition of the Dallas Morning News.*

Cresson is located thirteen miles southwest of Fort Worth and to the southeast of Weatherford. Since Dunlap said the ship was headed toward the southeast away from the Fort Worth, Dallas, Weatherford area, it is possible he saw the high flyer on the way to another sighting down in Hill County.

John Ford left Hillsboro that night and headed toward home in Whitney. Near Peoria he looked up and saw a black object that looked very much like a passenger coach going in a southwesterly direction. He described it as "having an immense headlight and as being brilliantly lighted within and as traveling at a very rapid rate." Like the Dallas housewife, Ford's report did not appear in print for several days because he was afraid to say anything for fear people would think he was "trying to get off a gag."

By 2:00 a.m. the airship had sailed back north and was seen near Paris, not far from the Oklahoma border. Mr. J. A. Black, the night watchman for the Paris Oil and Cotton Company's local plant, was out on his early morning rounds with his pet dog when he saw a faint but luminous object in the northeast sky. At first he thought it was a gigantic meteor in a luminous,

Despite the fact that it is a considerable distance between Cisco, Texas and the Ozark Mountains, no one else reported seeing the airship that night.

April 16, 1897

Friday, April 16, 1897 was a banner day for the Texas airship. It was seen by more different people in more locations than at any other time during the adventure. That Friday was also the first time the mystery ship was supposedly seen in the daylight.

At 2:30 p.m. a Texas and Pacific freight train pulled out of Big Sandy, Texas headed for Dallas. The train was making good time and by 3:00 it had passed the town of Hawkins and was nearing Hawkins tank. Suddenly, in a clearing north of the tracks, conductor Joe E. "Truthful" Scully saw the famous airship sitting on the ground with its bow pointing toward the track. The train passed quickly so Scully only got a brief look but he was able to see the pilot making some sort of repairs to the ship. At Hawkins tank, Scully told his story to the telegraph operator who put it out on the wire. By the time "Truthful" reached Dallas, he was on his way to becoming a celebrity.

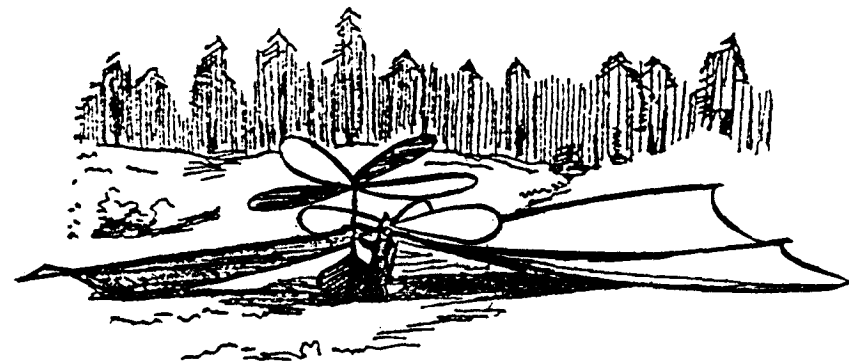
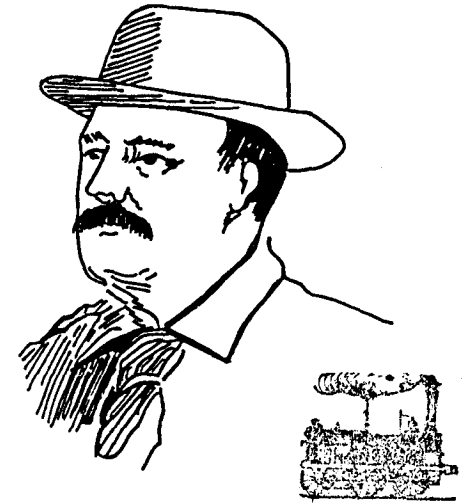
Sometime before nightfall that day, the repairs to the airship were apparently completed, because during the night the mystery ship was seen in numerous locations throughout East and North Central Texas. The first sighting may have been by Cooper Nott and two other gentlemen in Longview. Nott said, "It's no fake. I saw it with these eyes."

From Longview, the airship headed west. Colonel W. A. Robertson of Mississippi was on a train approaching Dallas when he saw a 200-foot-long flying ship sailing over Garland toward the southwest. The colonel quickly stuck his head out a window to try to get a better view, but the flying machine was traveling faster than the train and it quickly disappeared into the night. When asked if the ship was traveling at a high rate of speed, Robertson replied, "Yes, it looked to me like the fellow had an engagement to eat breakfast in the city of Mexico and was afraid he might be late." A reporter asked if it could

possibly have been a meteor. "I guess that when I see a thing I know it," replied the colonel.

According to the *San Antonio Express*, as the ship went west from Garland over the northern part of Dallas, it was seen by hundreds of people. A better description might be that hundreds were watching for it and some actually did see what they believed to be the airship. R. C. Kopisch, who ran the drugstore next to the Oriental Hotel in Dallas, said that he and as many as twenty of the hotel guests saw a bright light attached to something dark and opaque pass over the northern part of the city between 8:00 and 8:30 that night. It passed above the Dallas Brewery and disappeared heading toward the northwest.

Unlike most airship sightings, the druggist's report may actually have been confirmed by a totally independent sighting. About the same time the guests of the Oriental saw the light, a regularly scheduled electric car

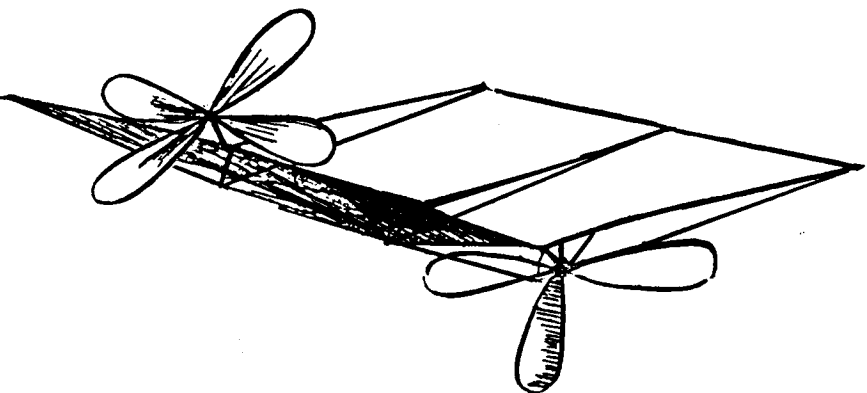


Above is a drawing of the alleged airship that "Truthful" Scully (top) said he saw on the ground near Hawkins tank in East Texas. The drawings, along with pictures on the following page appeared in the April 17, 1897 edition of the *Dallas Morning News*.

was returning to Bonham. At exactly 8:15 conductor John German saw a bright light far to the southwest traveling rapidly toward the northwest. German stopped the car and all the passengers watched the fantastic light with awe and wonder. Oscar Lusk, one of those passengers, had read about the airship, and when he explained the details, everyone became convinced they were seeing history in the making. As the light approached, German could hear a whizzing, whirring sound

but he was unable to make out any specific shape. The object disappeared in the direction of Denton.

Since Bonham is about 70 miles northeast of Dallas, the distance and direction of flight of the light seen by German and the passengers indicate it could have been the same light seen from Dallas, since both lights were heading northwest when first observed. If the Dallas light was seen about 8:00 p.m. and then it made a slight northward turn



*Above is the airship Colonel Robertson (top) saw passing over Garland, Texas on the night of April 16, 1897.*

after disappearing from the druggist's view, it would have followed the same path as the light seen from south of Bonham.

That possibility may also have an independent confirmation. German said the ship was headed in the direction of Denton but no sighting was made in that town. However, several people in Rhome, which is just a little west of Denton, did say they saw the ship at about 8:30. They said it was about the size of a small passenger coach with a white searchlight in front and five lighted windows on the side. The ship kept going without making a stop as though, one witness speculated, "we were as dead as Rhome of old."

Thirty minutes after passing over Rhome, the airship was supposedly seen in two places at one time, although both of the sightings at 9:00 p.m. that Friday night were secondhand reports and thus may not be reliable. In Dallas, C. W. Middleton said his cook, Mrs. Bina George, saw a bright object a few hundred yards above her head. At first she suspected that it was a cloud of fire, but as it got closer she realized it was a ship-shaped affair that was well lighted and traveled faster than any train of cars she had ever seen. She kept the sighting to herself for a few days until the secret grew too large for her to control and she "fessed up" to her employer.

Col. Robert H. Gaston of the Texas militia also reported a secondhand sighting at precisely the same time. He said that Tom Camp, a hand on the Gaston ranch in Kaufman County saw the airship. According to Camp, the machine resembled a Chinese flying dragon and was a monster breathing red fire through its nostrils. It had a dragon-shaped body and pin-like legs fore and aft that acted as propellers. He watched the object until it grew "as small as the gleam of a hotel clerk's diamond." Throughout the airship adventure, there were many strange descriptions of the airship, but Tom Camp was the only one to claim it resembled a fire-breathing Chinese flying dragon, so there is the strong likelihood that Tom had his vision while hoisting a jug of firewater.

Whether it came from Dallas, Kaufman County, or some other place, the airship was next seen at 9:10 p.m. near Granbury in Hood County, and that sighting was almost the

for a landing. As Smith watched, the vessel docked on the spire of the federal building and he could see some small but decorative apartments and 8 or 10 passengers, several of whom were ladies dressed in handsome Easter costumes. During the three-minute stop, two men emerged from the ship. One descended to the steeple, presumably, Smith decided, to drop off some letters to be mailed. The other man, with a lantern in hand, appeared to be applying oil at the junction of the wings. Being a good husband, Smith immediately called for his wife to wake up and see the marvel. Unfortunately, before she could reach the veranda, the "mysterious pilgrim" had sailed away into the night. There is no record of Mrs. Smith's reaction at having been awakened from a deep sleep to see an airship that wasn't there.

April 18, 1897

Easter Sunday in 1897 was a special day in North Texas. The weather was splendid, the sun was bright and warm, and spirits were high. In the morning the churches were full and in the afternoon the parks were overflowing. When all the eggs had been found, the children turned to flying kites and trying to catch fish; the men tried their hand at baseball and the ladies showed off their Easter finery. The lemonade and beer flowed freely and by all accounts a good time was had by all.

What made that particular day so unique was the fact that it was the only Easter in Texas history where the day's festivities culminated in "airship watching" parties. Since the famous airship had been the prime target of conversation throughout the day, thanks to the extended newspaper coverage, it was only natural that the celebrations should continue on into the night when the nocturnal visitor was known to wander. Some of the parties were semiformal and the guests were invited. Most, however, were informal, impromptu affairs where neighbors gathered in backyards to settle into a comfortable chair and spend the evening staring at the heavens. Undoubtedly the lemonade, and especially the beer, kept right on flowing until well into the night.

Sunday was also another day of strange airship tales. Down in Burleson County, near Caldwell, Texas the pilot of the mysterious airship may have become perturbed. It was reported by "some reliable darkies" that the airship landed in the Brazos river bottom to take on water. While on the ground, two of the aerial sailors captured a colored man who was hoeing cotton nearby and carried him off on the ship, supposedly as punishment because he had the audacity to be working on Easter Sunday. The mechanical dungeon, with its prisoner, then steamed away to the east and was soon out of sight. Unfortunately, the *Morning News* representative who submitted the story for publication was unable to find the witnesses to verify the facts. However, he did point out, "This is and has been a local option town since last summer and the nearest saloon is two miles away."



On April 18, 1897, the *Dallas Morning News* contained an article claiming that most airship patents to date had been of the self-propelled variety somewhat like the device pictured above. The *Morning News* claimed the devices worked well for descent, such as from a hilltop, but lacked much in the way of ascent.



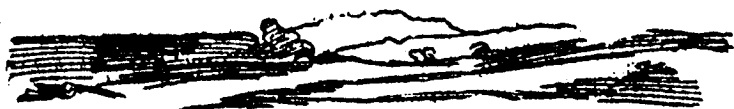
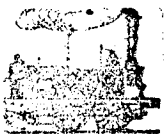
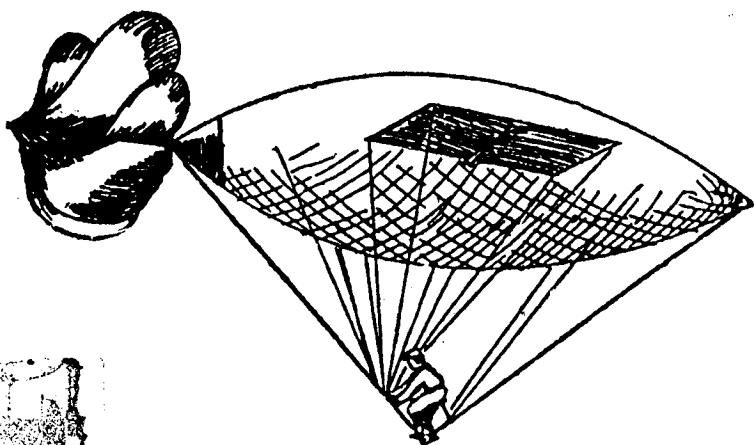
The second C. L. Mistrot advertisement. Despite the claims of the merchant, he was not responsible for the Texas airship.

Mistrot continued his attack on the McKinley administration by claiming that he and Dingley were forging in congress "the thorns that will spare no one." He also predicted that the people of New York, Boston, and New England would benefit from the new legislation while the people of Texas suffered. But there was a white knight flying to the rescue in an aerial machine. The ad concluded: "The tariff laws, which will enhance the values of clothing and other wearing apparel, as well as goods outside of our lines, fully 50 per cent, will soon be enacted by our present Congress, but the crown which they are decking with

April 28, 1897

April 28, 1897, was a good day for airship watching in the state capital of Austin. Several people said they saw the ship but the best report came from Mr. Otto F. Porsch, said to be "an intelligent and wholly reliable gentleman living at the corner of Colorado and Second streets and doing a grain and feed business at 402 East Sixth Street. When asked to comment on what he had seen, Porsch replied: "I was aroused from my sleep by my dog barking and growling, and I went to a window and looked out. It was very cloudy and dark, and I saw the glare of a big light on the clouds. I thought a large fire was in progress and hastily put on my clothes and went out into the yard to see where it was. As I opened the door to go out, my young dog, greatly scared at something, pushed by me and went into the house. My old dog stayed in the yard, and I noticed he was barking at something overhead, and I looked up and saw a great light slowly moving over the Salge Hotel. It was coming from the southeast and moved in a northwesterly direction. It appeared to me to be about 300 or 400 feet above the hotel, and it traveled very slow, the light be so blinding that I could not see the shape of the vehicle or whatever it was carrying. I watched it carefully, and after it had gone some distance and had passed me, I could see the shape of the rear end of the vessel, and it appeared to be in this shape." Mr. Porsch arranged his hands in a V shape, somewhat like the tail of a fish. "It was still moving very slowly," he continued, "but as I watched I saw a movement on each side of it like a bird flapping its wings, and its speed was at once greatly increased, and I watched it until it disappeared, which was not long after it began to increase its speed. It was drizzling a little, and it rained pretty hard after the light disappeared."

When asked, Porsch said no, he did not see any colored lights, only the one large one that was "very blinding." As to when the ship was seen, he said he immediately went back into the house and looked at his watch which showed exactly fifteen minutes after 4:00 a.m.



An artist's conception of Professor A. W. Barnard's aerial machine that was displayed at the Nashville Centennial. The drawing was widely circulated in Texas newspapers at a time when editors were proclaiming the Texas airship to be a hoax.

George continued on to Lake Charles, Louisiana where he took time to write a long detailed letter to his friend Dr. D. H. Tucker in Harlem, Texas. George Dunlap provided wonderful details of his adventure and included some drawings of the actual machine.

After mailing the letter, Dunlap continued his journey. Somewhere near Grenada, Mississippi, he stopped to assist in the rescue of some livestock that had become trapped by raging flood waters. During the rescue attempt, Dunlap lost his footing and slipped beneath the murky waters. The voice of a potentially valuable airship witness was silenced forever, but his letter survived and it was sent to the *Dallas Morning News* for

publication. Why the *Morning News* was selected and why the editors chose to reopen the airship adventure are both unsolved mysteries. For whatever reason, the *Morning News* officially closed the airship case by printing this last intriguing story. It was perhaps fitting that the editors did not include any editorial comment, because throughout the airship adventure, not one editor commented on any of the alleged close encounters with the mystery ship.

During the airship adventure, there were serious questions raised as to what was being seen and who was responsible. A lot of newspaper space was devoted to those questions. Fortunately, some additional space was reserved for some airship fun, which was fitting since no one really knew if they were dealing with a fake or an actual high flyer. Apparently there was some unwritten law in 1897 that required papers to make a little fun out of something that could not be proved just in case that something turned out to be a joke. When it came to airship tales, the Texas papers did not break that law.



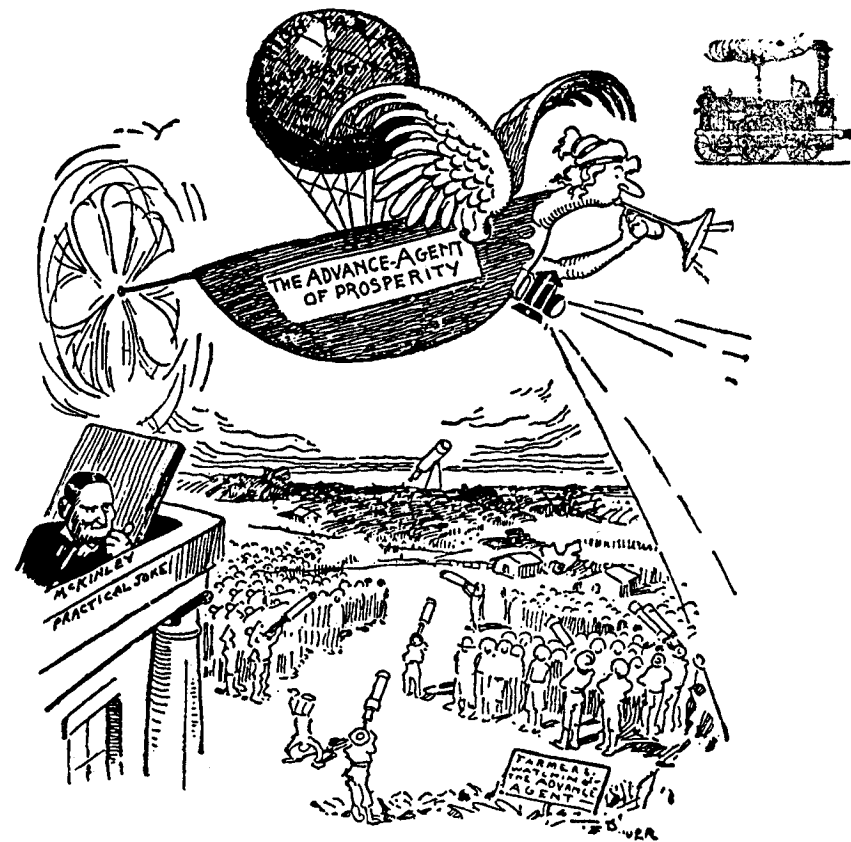
and consumers of America to escape the oppression of the Dingley bill by sailing far over the custom-houses."

The *Houston Post* also did not ignore either the political aspect or the Dingley bill. In fact, the *Post* would win the prize for best airship political cartoon with a drawing that depicted a humorous flying machine labeled, "The Advance-Agent of Prosperity." The cartoon, which proclaimed the airship as a practical joke of President McKinley, was accompanied by a poem reprinted from the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

As a part of its San Jacinto Day edition for 1897, the *Austin Daily Statesman* included a clever report that both poked fun at the airship and at the state legislature which was dragging its feet on enacting legislation called for at the earlier state convention in Fort Worth. The report was part of a speech given by Colonel Dink Botts to a group of his friends.

In his talk, the colonel gave an account of an airship sighting by the manager of the Driskill Hotel in Austin. Supposedly, the manager of the hotel, a man named Shadbolt, had been on the roof taking down some washing from a clothesline when the airship appeared and a voice called out asking if the town was Austin. When a surprised Shadbolt replied in the affirmative, someone dropped a note attached to a brick and the ship sailed off into the night. The note, which was wrapped in a newspaper that smelled of stale fish, stated that the ship was en route to China but would return in October next, by which time the writer hoped the Texas legislature would have passed all the blooming platform demands formulated at Fort Worth.

Although most members of the Texas legislative branch avoided any implication that they had seen the airship, Representative Hill of Travis County was an exception. He was more than happy to tell his tale to a group of friends gathered on the capitol steps. He said that on May 1, while he was visiting in the Hyde Park section of Austin, the airship appeared. The captain, who communicated in ancient Greek, said the ship was part of a Greek squadron on duty in the United States and his ship, *Eureka*, the flagship, was on an inspection tour of Texas. Hill described the ship in some detail and then explained the entire crew consisted of "a captain, two lieutenants, two



#### The Secret of the Airship Disclosed.

There's been a lot of lying done Of late out in the West, And some one's had a heap of fun Out of a merry jest He's spread reports from everywhere About a ship that flies Like all possessed throughout the air And skips off through the skies.	(Pray do not look askance), That Agent of Prosperity That travels in Advance.  I says it "was," for now, alas! 'Tis fallen in the dust; The bag above it, filled with gas, By some mischance did bust; And Hanna and McKinley dig Each other on the sly. And grin while thinking of the big Explosion in the sky.
Now I would not exaggerate, 'Tis wicked so to do. But one thing I'd asseverate That I know to be true; The airship was, in verity,	<i>Post-Dispatch</i> - N. A. J.

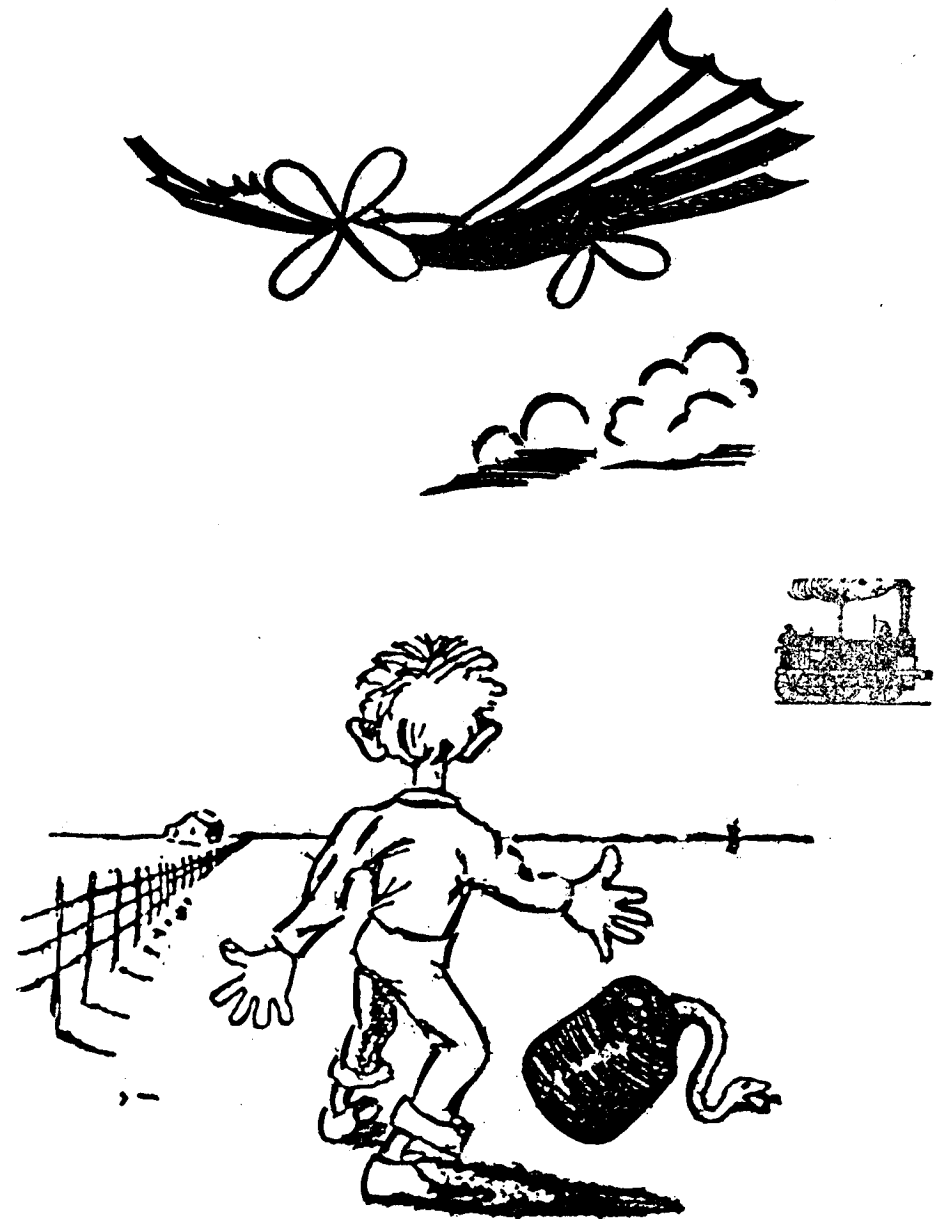
*Airship "political" cartoon and accompanying poem which appeared in the April 25, 1897 edition of the Houston Post.*

mention it to anyone in Texas. Either that or the story was one that Texas newspaper editors chose to ignore.

Since the *Dallas Morning News* assumed the lead in airship reporting, it naturally was the early leader in whiskey related stories. Even before the airship was sighted in Texas, the *Morning News* said of Kansas airships: "The sails of the Kansas airship seemed to have been made of 'three sheets in the wind.'" and "A Kansas City man who saw the airship said it 'looked to him about as big as a beer glass.' It is inferred from this that the airship is a schooner." At about the time the airship was winging its way to Texas, the *Morning News* reported: "The friends of a Dallas man have warned the saloons against selling him any more liquor. He has been seeing airships."

There was considerable speculation that the quality of liquor had something to do with the airship. As one story pointed out, "the man who sees a snake today may behold an airship tomorrow." Another airship editorial claimed, "Men of the world pronounced it a raw joke and a few crusty old chaps intimated that the quality of whiskey sold in the small towns was enough to make the average toper see anything from a boa constrictor to a full rigged ship in the heavens." In Ennis, Texas a Dr. E. Sturat, said to be an acknowledged authority in metaphysics, gave it as his opinion that the whole airship affair was due to "hypnotism and bad whiskey."

The *Dallas Daily Times Herald* wasn't far behind the *News*. As to the validity of airships, the *Herald* claimed, "Some are utterly skeptic and suggest that it is a new fad with those people who are unfortunate enough to 'see things.' Formerly their minds conjured up blue monkeys, Nile-like saurians and other creeping things equally disagreeable for the mind to dwell upon long at a time. They suggest that having exhausted the catalog of things that creep, they have by some mental somersault invaded the realm of flying things, and hence the airship." The *Herald* editor also commented on the alcohol situation. "Seeing the airship," the editor wrote, "is becoming quite an industry. It is even being witnessed by the inhabitants of towns that have been 'dry' these many years."



When the airship was reported over Oklahoma in early April, the *Dallas Morning News* ran this cartoon over the caption: "AN AIRSHIP SEEN IN OKLAHOMA." The implication that the airship was seen by someone "on

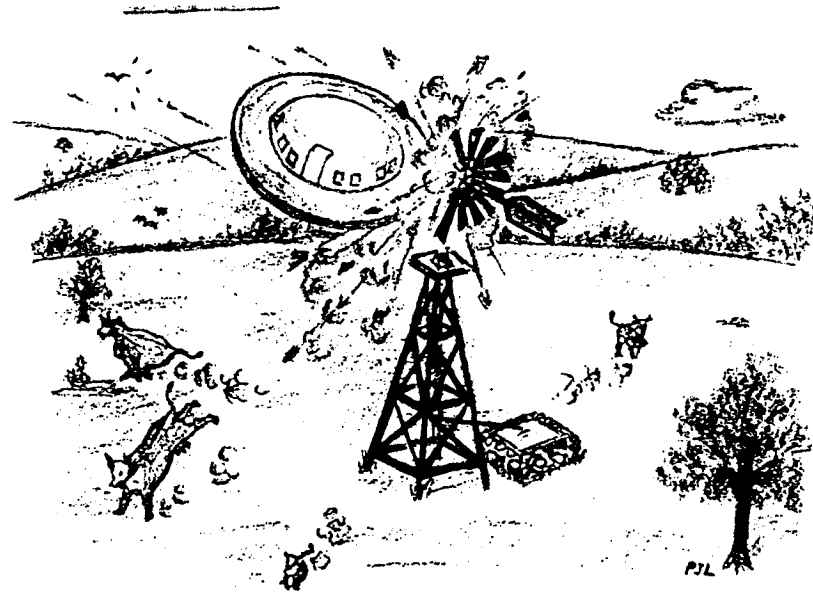
"as does the reality of plain talk, and you have to be careful how you mix them. Both are too important to be abused."

One of the leading Aurora skeptics was historian Betty Pegues of Newark, Texas which is "just down the road a piece" from Aurora. When the Wise County Historical Survey Committee decided to do an updated history of the county in 1975, Mrs. Pegues was selected to write the brief history of Aurora and she included a thorough examination of the spaceman tale which she considered a "beautiful piece of fiction."

Mrs. Pegues pointed out that in 1897 Aurora was something less than a thriving community. The failure of the railroad to come to town coupled with a severe problem from boll weevils and a devastating epidemic of spotted fever had brought the struggling community to its knees. She quoted another writer who had said "not even a Martian would be caught dead in Aurora in 1897" and reported that many people believed Haydon's concocted story was an effort to revive interest in the town.

In her article, Mrs. Pegues contended that the facts of Proctor not having a windmill, Weems not being an astronomer, and the cemetery association having no record of a man from Mars being buried locally were the three things that stood out to refute Haydon's story. She reiterated that Cates had not mentioned the story and added that Harold R. Bost had omitted any reference to the tale in his "Saga of Aurora."

As further evidence, Mrs. Pegues included quotes from oldtimers who had been living in Aurora in 1897. According to her story, Shaw Ford said the tale was a "bunch of bunk" and Oscar Lowry claimed it was a hoax. Mrs. Pegues, like Porterfield, also interviewed Robbie Hanson and quoted her as saying, "It is a hoax. I was in school that day and nothing happened." In fairness to the Aurora legend, it should be noted that Mrs. Hanson's memory may not have been totally accurate. According to the original Haydon story, the airship appeared about 6:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning when no one was in school.



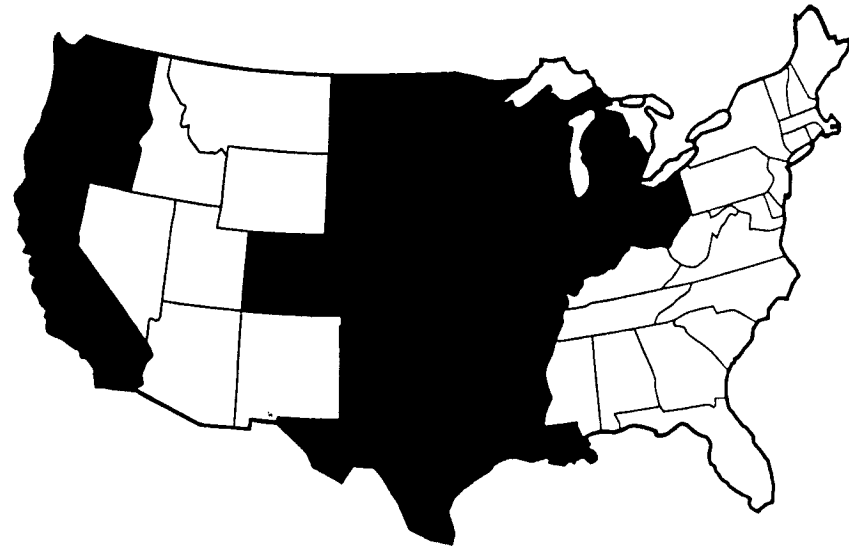
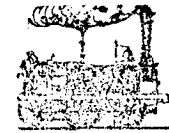
*An artist's conception of the crash at Aurora that appeared in the Wise County History. Although the picture shows the craft shaped like a flying saucer, it was described at the time as being cigar-shaped. Drawn by Mrs. Peggy Jenkins Logan. Used with permission from Mrs. Rosalie Gregg, Chairman, Wise County Historical Commission.*

There was one point of controversy brought out by Mrs. Pegues. Bill Case had claimed that he had Mary Evans saying on tape that she remembered the crash incident. Mrs. Pegues countered by reporting that Mary Evans had gone on record saying she didn't know anything about the crash until it came up in the spring of 1973. "I could have told them a story about the spaceship falling at Aurora," Mrs. Evans was quoted as saying, "but it wouldn't have been true. Sooner or later they would have caught me in a lie." Mrs. Pegues left no doubt that she also believed the tale to be a total lie.

The Aurora story, which had garnered so much national and international attention, slipped quietly out of the headlines. Bill Case, a true champion of the cause, passed away early in 1974 and no one stepped forward to take up the baton and carry on the hunt. The MUFON investigative team had reached a dead



APPENDIX A  
Maps

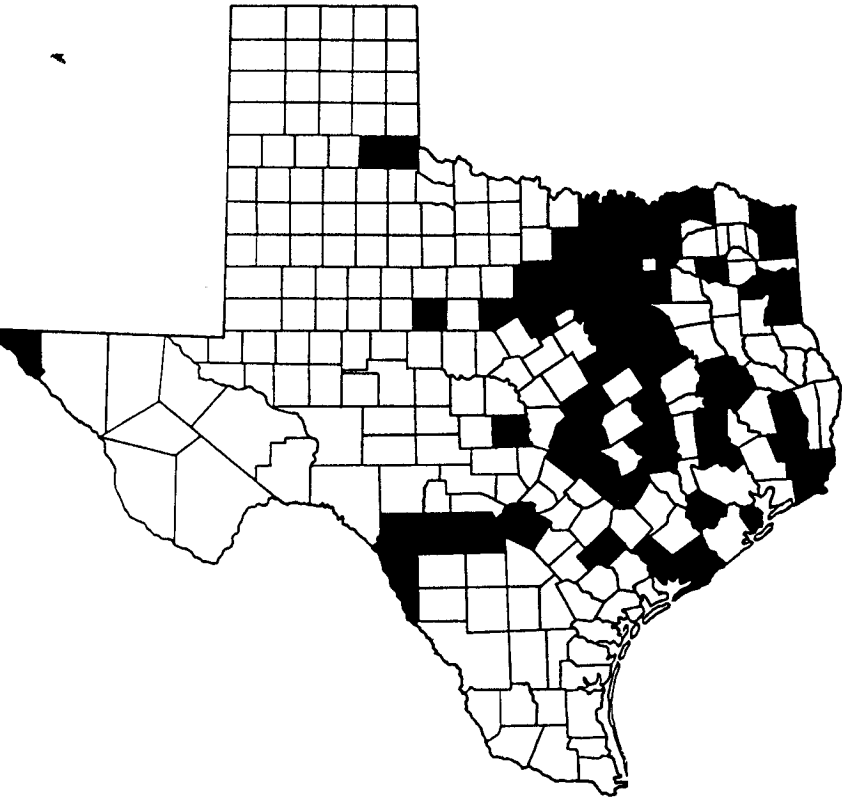


*This map shows the states where the airship was seen in 1896-1897. There were a few reports from other states but they were so isolated and suspect that they were omitted.*



## APPENDIX B

### The Log of the Airship



*This map shows the counties where the airship was reported in Texas. The sighting in El Paso is included although the circumstances are highly suspect.*

<i>Date Seen</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Time Seen</i>	<i>Paper Printed</i>	<i>Date</i>
4-12	Ennis	Ellis	night	DMN	4-19
4-13	Denton	Denton	night	DMN	4-15
4-14	Weatherford	Parker	9 p.m.	DMN	4-16
4-14	Corsicana	Navarro	8:30 p.m.	DMN	4-16
4-14	Cresson	Hood	night	DMN	4-16
4-14	Dallas	Dallas	night	DMN	4-18
4-14	Peoria	Hill	night	DMN	4-18
4-14	Orange	Orange	night	GDN	4-22
4-14	Beaumont	Jefferson	10 p.m.	NOP	4-25
4-15	Dallas	Dallas	night	DMN	4-17
4-15	Marshall	Harrison	10:30 p.m.	DMN	4-17
4-15	Hillsboro	Hill	9 p.m.	DMN	4-17
4-15	El Paso	El Paso	8-9 p.m.	ILL	4-17
4-15	Paris	Lamar	2 a.m.	DMN	4-17
4-15	Sherman	Grayson	night	DMN	4-17
4-15	Fort Worth	Tarrant	night	DMN	4-17
4-15	Texarkana	Bowie	night	DMN	4-18
4-15	Garland	Dallas	night	DMN	4-18
4-15	Greenville	Hunt	night	DMN	4-18
4-15	near Cisco	Eastland	night	FWR	4-18
4-16	Hawkins	Wood	3 p.m.	DMN	4-17
4-16	Garland	Dallas	evening	DMN	4-17
4-16	Oak Cliff	Dallas	10 p.m.	DTH	4-17
4-16	Dallas	Dallas	8 p.m.	SAE	4-17
4-16	ranch	Kaufman	9 p.m.	DMN	4-18
4-16	Dallas	Dallas	9 p.m.	DMN	4-18
4-16	Bonham	Fannin	8:15 p.m.	DMN	4-18
4-16	Cleburne	Johnson	night	DMN	4-18
4-16	Tioga	Grayson	11:30 p.m.	DMN	4-18
4-16	Fort Worth	Tarrant	night	DMN	4-18
4-16	Mansfield	Tarrant	9:45 p.m.	DMN	4-18
4-16	Forney	Kaufman	night	DMN	4-18
4-16	Rhome	Wise	8:30 p.m.	FWR	4-18

age drawing of the "Airship"—a black, stubby, torpedo, furnished with the large fabric wings described by Attorney Collins. Even a tale by a San Rafael hunter was entertained concerning the alleged discovery by him of an airship machine hop on Bolinas Ridge some months earlier. The call actually began to believe it was closing in on the story of the century.

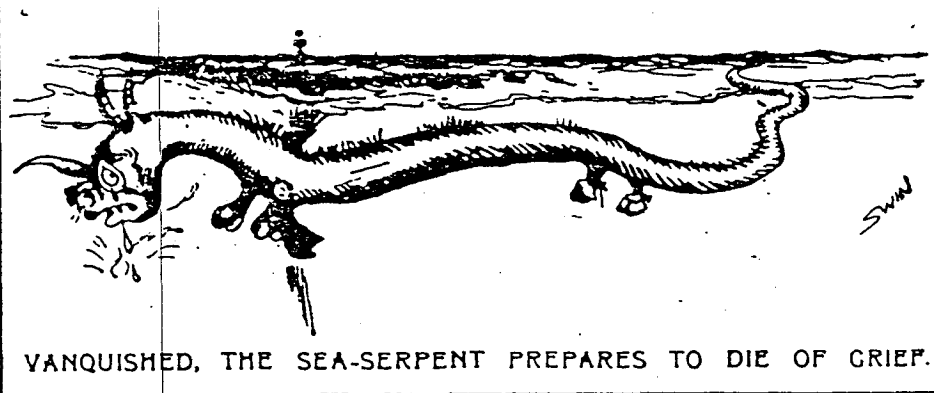
The San Francisco Examiner had the young William Randolph Hearst (a coming name in sensational journalism) as editor-in-chief, but Hearst had left the West Coast some months before and was then in New York at the helm of the Journal-American, a failing daily he had recently purchased and was now rebuilding in a fierce circulation battle with the other metropolitan papers. Even though well occupied with the Journal-American, Hearst kept close control over the Examiner's editorial policies, constantly urging more pictures and bigger type. One would have expected the Examiner to have played up the sensational aspects; yet, the comment in its columns on the California mystery light was of a light-hearted nature mixed with considerable straightforward news reporting. In fact, the Examiner didn't even mention the airship business until November 23rd. The Examiner even corrected the facts on the Oakland airship sightings as reported by the call. In a story under the peculiar multi-headings common to the newspapers of the time: "Queer Things You See When," "A Mysterious Wanderer of the Skies Perplexes People," "The Sea Serpent Has Drawn in His Horns and His Nose is Out of Joint," the Examiner quoted Superintendent Tiffany of the Piedmont Electric road on the aerial "bark." Tiffany said:

I made a thorough investigation today of the story told by some of our men of an alleged airship seen floating over Saint Mary's College...so far as I could learn from our men, none of them saw anything but a light. I had a long talk with Selby Yost and he admitted that he saw nothing but a moving light in the air. The airship proposition was, I found, not considered for a moment.

The talented Examiner cartoonist, James Swinnerton, then went to work and had a field day with the airship subject at the expense of the true believers.

The call, involved in a circulation struggle with the Hearst paper, expressed a conviction that the Examiner's negative outlook was simply due to the fact that they had been scooped by their cross-town rival.

The November 24th issue of the call carried charges by Attorney Collins that: "...a Chronicle reporter had misrepresented him [claiming] that he had actually seen the airship and was processing a patent for it." Furthermore, Collins



VANQUISHED, THE SEA-SERPENT PREPARES TO DIE OF GRIEF.



ONE MAN WHO SAW IT.



INVENTED THE AIRSHIP.



a sort of imitation, but more slow, of the barking! At that point I moved from the kitchen window, where we had been watching, and went into the lavatory, where there is a little window giving a better view. And I was indeed then able to see the robot more clearly.”

### “I decided to approach it”

Asked by the newspaper staff whether he had felt frightened, Díaz said: “I felt ‘goose-pimples’, as we say, and a very peculiar sensation. But, having watched it for over half an hour already, I didn’t feel any fear. I asked my boy whether he knew where the torch was. I managed to find it and, arming myself with a hunting knife, I unbolted the door, but when I got out there I found the robot had disappeared, and I saw the craft taking off again and heading in the direction of a grove of trees lying on the right-hand side of our house.”

### Noise produced by the UFO

Asked if the UFO made any noise, he said yes, it was a noise like the sound emitted by high voltage electricity cables.

Asked how long exactly he and his son had watched the robot, he replied that it was for about twenty minutes. “Its body looked square — that’s all. We could make out neither head, nor arms. In height, it was a little shorter than myself.”

Domínguez Díaz said the night was quite dark and

the weather not very good, and that this was why he had not been able to see the robot more clearly. He added that when he opened the door and went out he could see flashes of light directed towards the house from the departing craft.

He and his son finally went to bed at 7.30 that morning. A few hours later they were up again, and they went to inspect the spot where the UFO had stood, and found numerous footprints and marks left by the craft. There were also holes in the ground, and areas of scorched earth and scorched grass. The marks were crescent-shaped.

Concluding the report, the group of investigators from the newspaper confirm that they went to the landing site and also saw the marks and burns. The area of scorched soil and grass measured about five square metres. They said they felt this was due to a sudden burst of heat rather than actual flame, because the burning was quite superficial and sporadic, and had not penetrated deeply into the soil. At first they found only two holes, about 30 cms. deep and 2 cms. in diameter, and lying 1½ m. apart. The holes ran into the ground on a slant and this gave the investigators the impression that there must be a third hole, in accordance with the concept of an adjustable tripod landing-gear, and indeed after a few minutes of further search they did find the third hole, concealed at first sight by a tuft of grass.

(Credit and thanks for photostat of *Pueblo* press report to reader Jean Bastide of Aix-en-Provence, France.)

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## FSR BOOKSHELF — 16

New UFO books reviewed by...

*Janet & Colin Bord*

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.

Many articles on the subject have been published in UFO journals, and one booklet dealing with the

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.

The author also deals efficiently with the Hamilton calf-napping and the Aurora spaceship crash, two apocryphal tales that have in past years received unwarranted publicity and have recently been shown to be quite unsubstantiated. The attitude of the contemporary newspapers, that they would publish anything that might entertain their readers, whether true or not, combined with the vogue for the most respectable of men to vie with one another in telling "tall stories", makes the unravelling of this mystery practically impossible. Daniel Cohen provides no answers to the "airship mystery", and on the last page declares himself to be a "long-time UFO skeptic", implying that both the airship and the UFO phenomenon are of a socio-psychological nature. We find that this type of explanation is usually promoted by those who have read briefly but not deeply into the subject. But in spite of this shortcoming, Cohen has provided ufologists with a balanced, clearly written and thought-provoking book on one of the lesser-known aspects of ufology.

The UFO is a world-wide phenomenon, yet there are vast areas of the earth which, if we are to judge by the quantity of reports published, seem rarely to receive UFO visitations. The huge African continent is one such area, and in her book **UFOs — African Encounters** Cynthia Hind shows that without competent local investigators, the UFO occurrences in any area will remain unknown, however spectacular they might be. Mrs. Hind is based in Zimbabwe, and from there has investigated some intriguing cases in many parts of the African continent. Although details of many of these cases have already been published elsewhere, it is useful to have all these high interest African cases together in one volume, and to realise that there may be many more strange cases in that continent which even the indefatigable Mrs. Hind has not uncovered. She is to be congratulated on her efforts, as she works virtually single-handed and Africa is a big territory to cover. Her book is sane, sensible and readable, and we recommend it. *UFOs — African Encounters* is a 236-page paperback illustrated with photographs and drawings, plus notes, bibliography and index. Published in Africa by Gemini, P.O. Box MP 49, Mount Pleasant, Salisbury, Zimbabwe (price unknown), the U.K. price is £2.95 and in the U.K. stocks are held by the Herne Bay bookseller Suzanne Stebbing and Middle East Books. In case of difficulty contact the U.K. distributor John Neild Associates, Old Bakery Cottage, 45 Freehold Street, Lower Heyford, Oxon, OX5 3NS.

All over Britain local UFO research groups continue diligently to follow up UFO reports in their immediate area, but unless they publish a magazine or newsletter, the results of their efforts never become

known to other researchers. To be of any value, UFO data should be made public so that it can be accessible to those engaged in a wider study of the phenomenon. One group that has been able to do this is PUFORG (Plymouth Unidentified Flying Objects Research Group), who have published a 34-page booklet of recent sightings: **UFOs Over Plymouth** (available price £1.05 including postage from PUFORG, P.O. Box 75, Plymouth, PL1 1SQ). The period 1978-81 was a busy one for the group, their major case involving an alleged UFO burn inflicted on a young woman in September 1981 when a UFO shot down a green beam of light onto her hand as she was opening her back door when returning home late at night. A PUFORG investigator was on the spot within four hours and thus was able to record the progress of the injury from the very early stage. This strange case deserves wider publicity. The booklet is illustrated with drawings and photographs, and is generally well produced, but we are surprised that after telling readers "If you see a UFO, contact PUFORG as soon as possible," they give only a Post Office Box address, and no telephone number for instant contact in case of major events of long duration.

By now we have come to expect a high standard of content in the annual MUFON UFO Symposium Proceedings, and the papers presented at the 1982 Symposium, MUFON's thirteenth, were no exception. The theme was **UFOs — Canada: A Global Perspective**, and the speakers were Arthur Bray (on professionalism), Dr. George and Iris Owen (on the relationship of the UFO phenomenon to parapsychological research), Dr. Michael A. Persinger (on predicting UFO events and experiences), Dr. Frederick E. Alzofon (on a UFO propulsion model), John F. Schuessler, M.S. (on radiation sickness caused by UFOs), David Haisell (on an international perspective in UFO research), Dr. J. Allen Hynek (on preparing for the next UFO flap), and William L. Moore (on new evidence in the Roswell investigation into crashed UFOs). The resulting publication, a 104-page, large-format softcover, is a readable mixture of facts, theories and opinions, obtainable price \$10 (plus \$1.50 for foreign postage) from Mutual UFO Network, 103 Oldtowne Road, Seguin, TX 78155, U.S.A.

**We Discovered Alien Bases on the Moon** by Fred Steckling is yet another compilation of fuzzy photographs of the Moon's surface, liberally decorated with arrows which direct the reader's attention to vague surface marks which the author believes to be objects, vehicles, UFOs, domes, constructions, mining activities, symbols, letters, vegetation, lakes, reservoirs, and clouds. This book is even less convincing than those by Leonard and Wilson; Mr. Steckling's knowledge of ufology is fragmentary and his attitude extremely



naive and gullible. As an example, John Searl and his ridiculous claims are apparently taken at face value and he is credited as being a "British scientist" with "the National Space Research consortium." Searl's true status and the reality of his "consortium" can be quite easily checked, so if the author can be so inaccurate and misleading about this, what in the book can the reader accept as accurate? This 192-page softcover book, though nicely produced and illustrated with black and white and colour photographs, is only likely to be of interest or value to those who enjoy collecting all UFO-related material whatever its quality. It can be obtained from GAF International, P.O. Box 1722, Vista, CA 92083, U.S.A., price \$9.95 plus \$1 postage in U.S.A., \$3 postage abroad.

Arcturus Book Service are issuing a variety of publications of historical interest, and the following are currently available from A.B.S. at 263 N. Ballston Ave., Scotia, NY 12302, U.S.A.: *UFO Propulsion Systems, Origins and Purposes* by Behrendt (20-page booklet, price \$3.50); *Truman Bethurum's Personal Scrapbook*, an exact reproduction of the contactee's personal

newsclippings and memorabilia (72 pages, price \$10); *Those Saucers*, a Gisholt Machine Company newsletter from 1958 devoted to UFO sightings (8 pages, price \$1.50); *Capsule History Behind the Flying Saucers* and *Technical Briefing Behind the Flying Saucers* both by Frank Scully (both 2 pages, both price 50 cents); *A Survey of Press Coverage of Unidentified Flying Objects, 1947-1966* by Herbert J. Strentz, a full-length treatment of how the U.S. Air Force and the media handled UFO reports in the first 20 years of UFO history (341 pages, price \$24.50). Arcturus Book Service also provide a superlative service in supplying old and new UFO books, and their catalogue (price \$3.50 outside U.S.A. and Canada) is well worth getting.

U.K. readers who may wish to obtain out-of-print UFO books and magazines will also be interested to know that Middle East Books (16 Brockenhurst Gardens, Mill Hill, London NW7 2JX) from time to time issue a catalogue of new and second-hand UFO publications for sale. They also offer books on Atlantis, ancient mysteries, pyramidology, the occult and other subjects.

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## THE CASE OF THE VANISHING GENERAL

Since, as we all know, UFOs do not exist, many folk must have been surprised indeed to see the following item, in extra black type, right in the centre of page 8 of London's evening paper, *The Evening Standard*, for August 19, 1982:-

'UFO kidnap' puts U.S. Army in a flap

Standard Reporter

LOS ANGELES, Thursday. A REPORT that America's Vietnam Commander, General William Westmoreland, had been "snatched by a flying saucer", sparked off a full-scale emergency alert.

The report was made by 49-year-old Mrs. Edith Mello. Security Police immediately tried to track down the general. They failed. And troops at El Paso Army Base in Texas were put on full alert.

"We put out an all-points bulletin", said Army spokesman Ed Starnes. "But four hours later we decided the woman's claim was just too much so we called off the search."

The Army said later that General Westmoreland had been found . . . but refused to say where."

Goodness me! *Don't the U.S. Army know* that UFOs don't exist? And *don't they know* that folk who report UFOs are nut cases? (This is even worse than Ike Eisenhower's famous 'disappearance', allegedly secretly

to view a UFO or UFOs at Muroc (Edwards Air Base), California, on February 20 1954.)

On the following day, Friday, August 20, a London morning paper, *The Sun*, ran a briefer version of the story:-

General in UFO Scare

PANIC broke out when an American Vietnam War hero was reported kidnapped . . . by a flying saucer.

Twenty thousand U.S. troops were put on full alert.

A woman told police in Monahana, Texas, that she and General William Westmoreland had been robbed by aliens, who had whisked him into outer space.

The General turned up safe . . . and the woman is under psychiatric observation.

But is it possible that the last two lines of this report contain a serious warning for folk who might be disposed to turn in UFO reports?

Isn't it the Soviet Union where people who displease the authorities in some way or other find themselves in the notorious Serbskiy Institut or some other hospital and forced to undergo injections, some of which inflict damage of a permanent nature?

*Are we seeing the Shape of Things to Come?* — G.C.

# ARE THE UFONAUTS FOWL PLOTTERS?

*Nigel Watson*

**M**OST ufologists are familiar with the bizarre elements contained in stories of encounters with ufonauts. Often the behaviour of these entities is so peculiar that the sanity of the witness, or witnesses, has to be seriously considered. A case with these qualities was recounted by Jorge J. Martín in his article "The Chicken Poachers On Puerto Rico," published in FSR Vol. 27, No. 1. One of the two young witnesses reported the activities of 5 entities who were outside their home in the early hours of the morning. She told Martín that: "They certainly seemed to be looking for something out there in the patio, and they were moving the zinc sheets about. They seemed to be very interested in the chickens too, for most of the time they kept shaking the pens and at times they peered closely and fixedly at the chickens. It was something to do with the chickens, that's for sure!"

If we go along with the extraterrestrial hypothesis, we might contend that these beings were conducting some kind of scientific survey, and that one of their objectives was to examine the state of chickens on Earth. Or we might even speculate that they were part of an intergalactic catering corps devoted to discovering new culinary delights to offer to the hordes of their fellow spacemen who are waiting to invade Earth.

This dotty example of entity behaviour can be compared to an incident which occurred during the British 1909 phantom airship wave. At the height of the airship observations many sober British citizens reported circumstantial incidents which indicated that enemy agents had infiltrated the country bent on sinister survey missions. Most of these accounts are included in my article "Airships and Invaders; Background to a Social Panic" in *Magonia* No. 3. However, the weirdest story came from a person in Waltham, Lincolnshire, who in a letter to the *Grimsby News* signed himself "Patriot."

Patriot informed the readers of the *Grimsby News*, in the 28th May 1909 edition, that he felt it "... my duty to draw your attention to an undoubted example of espionage by an emissary of a foreign power which came under my notice the other day."

As he was sleeping in a chair positioned in his garden, he was suddenly woken by a guttural voice. Opening his eyes he saw a gentleman who had a bullet-shaped head, with close cropped hair, standing near his garden paling. On further examination Patriot could see that the man was unwashed, had a weeks' growth of hair on his face, and was dressed like a common labourer. Furthermore, the man was stout and of a medium height. This wasn't a very extraordinary observation except for the fact that this person

concentrated his gaze on the figure of Patriot's fine example of Buff Orpington cockerel.

It was at this point that a rather strange conversation took place. The stranger spoke English in a guttural manner, which Patriot later considered to be due to the German origin of the speaker.

"That's a nish bird, mishter," exclaimed the stranger.

In a modest manner Patriot replied: "It is a tolerably good bird."

After a long pause, during which time the stranger seemed to be deep in thought, he finally asked: "Shingk she lays a lot of eggs?"

"It's a cockerel" said Patriot, rather surprised that the man wasn't aware of the difference between a cock and a hen bird.

"She's a cock'rel, ish she?" was the silly reply.

"No. *He* is a cockerel," corrected Patriot.

"He is a cock'rel. Are all zhuzhers cock'rels?" the stranger asked.

Patriot thought the man was simple minded, but said: "Of course not. All the others are hens."

"All zhuzhers are hens," repeated the stranger under his breath, then after a period of meditation said: "They lay a lot of eggs, I shingk."

"They lay very well," boasted Patriot. "They are laying very well at present, Sjr, and I may be forgiven a little pride in the fact."

After this dialogue the stranger made a fatal mistake. As he pulled a very dirty handkerchief from his coat pocket, a piece of brightly coloured card fluttered from the pocket and landed on the ground. Before the man recovered it Patriot saw that it had been torn from a larger piece of card, and that it bore the words "Professor", "Pil", "cure" and "universal." The stranger then shuffled off in the direction of Waltham Church.

Reflecting on this incident, Patriot was forced to believe that the guttural speech of the person indicated that he was a German secret agent. In addition the word "Pil" on the card he dropped could have meant Pillau, a town in Prussia, according to Patriot. (Though it is more likely the card was nothing more than an advertisement for a patent medicine of some kind, to my way of thinking.) Hence, Patriot came to the conclusion that the man was in reality a German professor of poultry-breeding who had been employed by the German secret service. His argument was: "That the Germans intend to invade England none but a few contemptible nincompoops dispute. It is obvious that when the troops do land they will require food. Is it not therefore probable, nay certain, that an

intelligent nation like the Germans would send out men skilfully trained in the arts of deception to spy out where the best provisions lie?"

It is easy to see that Patriot interpreted his unusual encounter in a manner which went along with the predominant worries prevalent at that time. After all British citizens were "seeing" German spies in the air, and on the ground (or even worrying about whether they were burrowing underneath them!) so it was no wonder that Patriot "saw," or claimed to see, a German poultry spy. If we are to be completely level-headed about this encounter, we might surmise that if it actually took place as he described, then he merely met a gentleman of the road. Tramps, as they were popularly called, were not too infrequently seen in Britain at that time — or for many years later. Indeed in that locality at about the same time other alleged German spy incidents were explained by sceptics and the authorities as being the mistakenly perceived activities of tramps. We might even speculate that the whole encounter was merely a vivid dream, or that Patriot made up the story for propaganda purposes, or he was a soft-headed chump who liked writing long silly letters (I know I do!)

In the same way we could dismiss the Puerto Rico encounter which took place on the 3rd March 1980. Just as Patriot saw his entity as an archetypal German (bullet-headed, stout, cropped hair, guttural voice, etc) so the witness in Puerto Rico saw her entities in the light of a new predominant paradigm. Although I'm no expert on Puerto Rico, we might assume that the inhabitants of the island are aware of the UFO phenomenon, and therefore the five entities looked and behaved as if they had just stepped out of a science fiction movie. Another interesting point is the fact that in both cases no aerial phenomena was directly associated with the entities; we are left to make that assumption. A sceptic might say that the Puerto Rico encounter was another instance of a vivid dream, or a gang of drunks dressed in fancy costumes were responsible, or the witness was a weak-minded individual who saw spacemen at any suitable opportunity (we could even invoke the works of Freud at this juncture).

On the face of it these sceptical considerations seem as unlikely as the reported incidents themselves. We need a whole lot more evidence about both cases if we are to attempt to explain them in a satisfactory manner. Since we don't have such evidence it is better to state that these incidents didn't happen at all, and that the witnesses are liars who bask in the light of publicity: taking this viewpoint we need not trouble ourselves with the messy particulars of these mental aberrations. Such an attitude is supported by the philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) who argued that where an event is reported that is contrary to all our ordinary experience, it is wiser to suppose that the report is false.

If we ignore such advice we can examine these inci-

dents from several standpoints. Granville Oldroyd, Britain's most industrious historical anomalous phenomena researcher, notes that:

"There are, as I see it, four possibilities, which are:-

- 1) Both reports are untrue.
- 2) Both reports are true but unconnected.
- 3) Both reports are true and are connected with each other.
- 4) One report is false and one report is true.

We have one chance in four of selecting the correct one: not very good odds . . ."

These four categories do not exhaust all the possibilities open to us. For example we could differentiate between objective and subjective truth, and hypothesise that:—

- 5) Both reports are objective and connected.
  - 6) Both reports are objective but unconnected.
  - 7) Both reports are subjective and connected.
- Etc.

Such considerations can be seen as our witting response to these accounts. But on analysing this data we can present our unwitting response to such incidents by any conclusion we might make which isn't supported by the evidence. For instance, if we conclude that both incidents are true and connected with each other, then we must have some valid arguments to support this statement. Furthermore any extrapolations based on this evidence must also be based on valid arguments. Even if you can prove that both incidents are objectively true, it doesn't follow that extraterrestrial spacemen have taken an interest in terrestrial poultry for 71 years, or that the German people have a network of secret poultry spies which they have hidden throughout the 20th century!

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Hence an unwitting response to such accounts can be seen when they are uncritically incorporated into what are perceived as larger patterns of activity, which are more likely to be reflections of our own assumptions and bias rather than any insight into objective reality. Thus, Martín relates the Puerto Rico sighting to a UFO which took place nearby at the same time, and to reports made throughout Puerto Rico, over several years, of animal mutilations which have included hen murders of the strange kind. In his "Notes and Comments on the Puerto Rico Chicken Poachers" Gordon Creighton (in FSR Vol. 27, No. 1) goes one step further and links the Puerto Rican cases to a global plot by the UFO entities (or their controllers) who are bent on mutilating animals for some sinister reason that we can only guess at. On the same basis we can speculate that the airship waves of the pre-1947 period can be directly related to the post-1947 UFO waves, and that the same extramundane source is responsible for all of them.

The danger with this kind of approach is that we ignore the context in which the sightings are made. Since a reported UFO observation (or something we might relate to a UFO type observation) is part of a human experience, we must examine the prevailing beliefs and attitudes of the percipients and note the influences which might have a bearing on them. We might note that historical, cultural and geographical factors, amongst others, separate UFO waves and flaps (even the use of terminology like UFO wave or UFO flap is a manifestation of our ufological bias). Thus we should ask why that person, or that group of people, at that time, in that locality, "saw" and reported an incident which they felt to be unusual, and why they noted the incident which they felt to be unusual, and why they noted the incident and how they interpreted it.

Many ufologists have collected legends, folktales, and accounts of historical events which they believe relate to the contemporary UFO context. However, this kind of approach assumes that our current secular UFO hypotheses can interpret any historical incident which bears a relationship to our current concepts of UFO visitations, without any regard to their context or to our own bias and prejudice which are part of the contemporary context. Perhaps in the light of this we

ought to consider whether our UFO hypotheses have any legitimate right to be applied on a Universal basis; after all we should be sympathetic to the idea that when we are dealing with different UFO waves and flaps, they might have come about for a multitude of different reasons, have a special meaning for the percipients involved, have uniqueness in many respects, and have an inner dynamic of their own.

We only have to look at the ridiculous lengths to which Space Age interpreters have gone in order to discover the existence of space vehicles and astronauts in our ancient past. It is obvious how meaningless such observations are when based on poor research methods and gigantic leaps of the imagination. Such techniques are fine if we are attempting to produce a book which will top the best seller charts, or a work of science fiction. But if we want to make a valuable contribution to ufology and other areas of study, we must constantly question our data in a rational and sceptical manner.

This doesn't mean to say that we should not use material separated by historical, cultural and geographical factors for the purposes of comparison. In this article I have revealed a possible chicken interface between a 1909 and a 1980 case, and this could lead to further research and study of immense importance! However without an awareness of the context and background of these incidents, and the qualities which separate and unite them, we are in danger of losing sight of the matrix of complex and subtle factors we are confronted with.

At this point you might like to know what I think about the significance of this alleged chicken interface. The main argument against any relationship between the two is that each emerged from a different milieu, and can be explained in a variety of ways. But ignoring those factors, we can note the lack of any other poultry cases both in 1909 and in the post-1947 period (unless you know differently). Out of all the thousands of contemporary cases it is relatively easy to find one that will have some elements which can be compared to some elements of a historical case. As to the validity of the two cases we have found, I will chicken out on that discussion, but I hope that readers will be aware that such material cannot be viewed in black and white terms.

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# MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

## Mice, UFOs and a Reward!

Dear Mr. Bowen, — As your readers well know, mice have long been used as subjects in laboratory experiments. The knowledge gained from these experiments often may be used to determine the mechanism of damage in a member of the same species injured by an otherwise unknown cause. (For example, the effects of microwave radiation are especially easy to identify.)

Because of this fact, I hereby offer a reward of \$50.00 for copies of each published description of mice killed or injured as the alleged result of their proximity to a UFO.

Yours sincerely,

**Jan Eric Herr,**  
6250 Stanley Avenue,  
San Diego, Calif. 92115  
U.S.A.

June 21, 1982.

## That "Concorde" film: unidentified object seen from a different angle

Dear Sir, — It was interesting to note how quickly that portion of the British Airways Concorde TV advert was cut when it was discovered there was an unwelcome intruder disporting itself thereon.

Experts were quick to discount this "visitor" as being a "light effect," but really did they do their homework? Perhaps their wills-not-to-believe were showing. Mine did when I first saw what I thought was a piece of paper chasing Concorde — how ridiculous!

Had these "experts" examined the rest of the Concorde footage they would have found that this "UFO" was there, following exactly the same path, on yet another piece of film taken that day, completely discounting their lens flare theory. Apparently there was more than one chase plane following the Concorde and photographing it simultaneously. But obviously, had the experts examined the film this further footage of the UFO would also have been cut; it wasn't, for on February 13th and 14th, 1982, in the British Airways World Cup advert, this fur-

ther UFO footage was beautifully revealed.

I was further reminded of my casual approach to the Concorde object when I saw "Ensemble" 14 (BBC) for again there were unidentified things in the sky during the balcony scene of *L'amour et vie*, showing the possible female tenant with a sky background. There, in the first shot, was a small cloud-like object over her right shoulder. In a second shot (and a third shot) there were two objects, the first had been joined by a cigar-like object.

Of course these objects could have been other things, like aircraft, but then the objects did not move between shots. They could have been structures, balcony or street lamps etc., but then they were up in the air and both were not there all of the time. An airship is a possibility of course, but then there were two, and two airships at once seems unlikely. Or perhaps it was a studio shot with a defective background; when should one close one's mind?

Yours faithfully,

**A. Calvert,**  
26 Well Road,  
Barnet,  
Herts.

February 15, 1982

## Misperceptions encouraged in USSR?

Dear FSR, — I urge your investigator to exercise extreme care in the evaluation of Soviet UFO accounts (e.g.: Creighton's three-part series on Feliks Zigel), since there appears to be some sort of deliberate deception going on.

For example, I believe that I have mustered overwhelming evidence that the great Russian UFO of June 14, 1980 (also seen over Argentina) was only the launching of the Kosmos-1188 satellite, distorted by eyewitness misperceptions and possibly by the addition of spurious fantasies. It is similar to the "jellyfish UFO" over Petrozavodsk on September 20, 1977, which has been solved to the satisfaction of leading American ufologists as the launching of Kosmos-955. Another spectacular Soviet UFO, on May

16, 1981, was caused by the launching of Meteor 2-7. All these shots came from the officially non-existent Pleseck cosmodrome, north of Moscow. Because of secrecy requirements, it suits Soviet purposes that these events be mistakenly perceived by the population as "UFOs," and I suspect that this misperception may be deliberately encouraged.

In the same light, the great Gindilis Report" (Academy of Sciences, 1979) on UFO statistics actually is based mainly on secret Soviet space weapons tests in the 1967 FOBS program "Garbage in, garbage out."

This data may disappoint British UFO enthusiasts but it cannot be ignored.

Respectfully,  
**James Oberg**  
RT2, Box 350,  
Dickinson  
TX 77539  
May 25, 1982

## New Spanish Book

Dear colleague, — We hereby advise you of the publication of our joint research book entitled *UFOs and Science* (Los OVNIS y la Ciencia), just released this month by Plaza & Janés, an important publisher from Barcelona, Spain.

The book's foreword has been contributed by Dr. Richard F. Haines, experimental psychologist at NASA's Ames Research Center, who wrote that "what Ballester Olmos and Guasp have done is to approach the subject of scientific Ufology systematically, carefully, critically," which basically matches with the real objectives the authors had in mind when working on this book.

We feel that, in order to place this book in its true perspective, the following thought from the book's introduction will be in order: "Ufology, in its current state, is an *embryo* of a significant, new discipline, as originally was the Alchemy, which only became Chemistry when magic and obscurantism were separated from pure