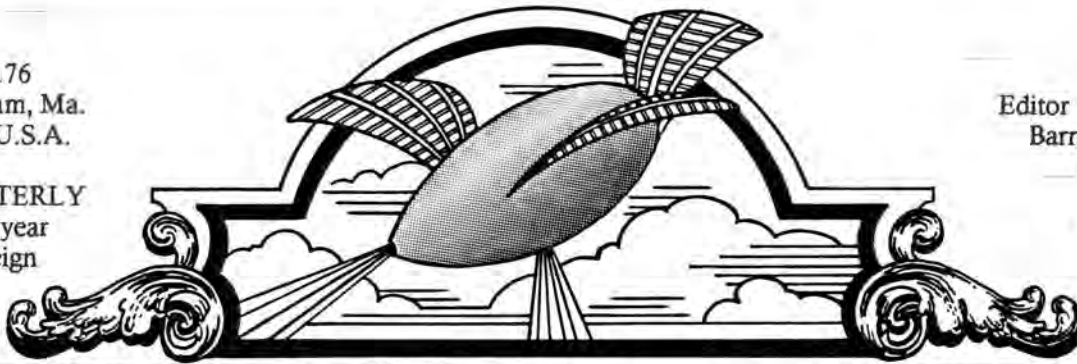


UHR  
Box 80176  
Stoneham, Ma.  
02180 U.S.A.

QUARTERLY  
\$15 per year  
\$20 foreign

Editor  
Barry Greenwood

#5 July 1999



# U.F.O. HISTORICAL REVIEW

## EDITORIAL

Readers will notice a new look for UHR. This is because the editor finally decided to catch up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century before it leaves him behind. UHR is power-driven by computer now, perhaps an insult to the purpose for which UHR was created, as an historical journal trying to capture the flavor of the past. Still, it will be a lot more efficient to produce this product without "White-Out," erasers or glue.

Since I am on the subject of computers, maybe the last time I will do this as I am supposed to be dealing with history, a few things need to be said. There has been a lot of flak from the more conservative elements of UFO research complaining about the degraded nature of UFO coverage on the Internet. It has certainly become a wasteland after my sampling of what is out there. Rumors flying with little impediment. Just about anything one can say or imagine can be printed with few ways to discern whether it is fact or fantasy. Researchers get into brawling arguments over the fine details of information. Not that this hasn't happened before, but now it can be done instantaneously!

There is little that can be done about the proliferation of bad information under these circumstances. One hopes that the reader is astute enough to tell what is useful and what is little more than sewage. One can react to it all and try to correct the record. That would be a full time job.

I have chosen to steer clear of much of the "UFONET" in cyberspace because the flux, the flow of information doesn't allow much time for reflection. One does not eat a brownie immediately out of the oven, but allows it to cool off before judging its tasteful merits! Instead, the "net" will be used to pull together data that has eluded us by conventional means. No longer can one pop into a local bookstore and expect to find a long-ago published item in a reasonable amount of time. UHR will use this new access to the Internet to enhance the search for lost information about the UFO phenomena. The sighting over Mt. Everest reported in this issue is an example of a recent net location of an old report.

The much-maligned Internet can be very useful, if the user will allow it to do a productive job and not turn his computer into a glorified garbage truck.

One last thing, to preserve the flavor for which UHR was created, the discussion of aged tales, this computer is being powered by steam (No, not hot air as I heard a few voices just say)!

## UFOs on MT. EVEREST IN 1933

On April 17, 1933, a team of climbers set up a camp at the base of Mt. Everest in an attempt to ultimately reach the summit. One of the team members, Frank Smythe, would later describe this and other climbing experiences in a book titled, "THE ADVENTURES OF A MOUNTAINEER (Dent's, 1940). The Everest climb is commonly known to be one of the most dangerous challenges for any mountain climber even today due to the thin air, bitter cold, and fierce storms.

Smythe's team had set up several camps up the mountain slope as way stations where the climbers could rest and obtain provisions. The advance team's sole job was to establish the camps to allow the main climbers to use their energy only for climbing, not for toting heavy supplies as well.

The highest camp erected was Camp Six, at 27,400 feet, at the time the highest camp on Everest. This was to be the last stop before the summit. As Sherpa guides finished and descended from Six, Smythe and a colleague, Eric Shipton, had ascended to Camp Five at 25,700 feet. The next day the team arrived at Camp Six, in the process passing by the remains of another camp where George Mallory and a colleague died in a summit attempt in 1922.

Fierce blizzards racked the mountain for much of the climb, hindering the progress of the climbers as well as sapping their strength. An attempt to reach the summit from Camp Six by Smythe and Shipton resulted in Shipton quitting the climb and returning to Camp Six. Smythe was on his own.

He ascended under great physical stress but it became obvious to him that his strength was no longer there. Smythe quit the climb short of his goal. As he made his way back to Camp Six to rendezvous with Shipton, a strange thing happened. In Smythe's words:

"I was making my way back towards Camp Six when chancing to look up, I saw two dark objects floating in the blue sky. In shape they resembled kite balloons, except that one appeared to possess short squat wings. As they hovered motionless, they seemed to pulsate in and out as though they were breathing. I gazed at them dumbfounded and intensely interested. It seemed to me that my brain was working normally, but to test myself I looked away. The objects did not follow my gaze but were still there when I looked back. So I looked away again, but this time identified by name various details of the landscape by way of a mental test. Yet, when I again looked back, the objects were still visible. A minute or two later, a mist drifted across the north-east shoulder of Everest above which they were poised. As this thickened the objects gradually disappeared behind it and were lost to sight. A few minutes later the mist blew away. I looked again, expecting to see them, but they had vanished as mysteriously as they had appeared. If it was an optical illusion it was a very strange one. But it is possible that fatigue magnified out of all proportion something capable of a perfectly ordinary and rational explanation. That is all I can say about the matter and it rests there."

The date of this incident is uncertain but must be around the latter part of April 1933.

So, what were they? Smythe prefaced his remarks on this, calling it a "bizarre" experience and adding, "It was in all probability an hallucination due to lack of oxygen, which affects not only the physical powers by (sic) the mental powers also."

It would be easy to brush this off as a hallucination. Smythe was physically exhausted and defeated in his effort to complete the Everest climb. Lack of oxygen at such altitudes can create visions of things that aren't there. But Smythe seemed fully aware of this possibility in his description and even tested himself to determine whether he was merely seeing things that didn't exist. Twice he did this and the objects remained, only to disappear when visually obscured by a mist passing across the mountain. Since a single witness (whose observational faculties could be questioned due to his condition) is the only source of information on the alleged objects, it becomes a matter of whether or not one believes that he saw real objects. It is difficult call.

What about balloons? Could they have been sent up by another mountain explorer, or even from someone a distance away below the mountain? Possibly. But in the turbulent atmosphere around Everest, how did they hover when it could been seen that a mist was blowing through the area? And how do balloons pulsate? Why did one have short wings? Could the objects have been real with some of the detail imagined?

Such is the case with most early UFO incidents. We have a lot of questions and few answers. At the same time, though the incident sounds on the surface like it is peculiar, we may never know if it was a product of Smythe's imagination, or whether something strange hovered over Everest that day. Stories like this are both fascinating and frustrating. They remain on the fringes of the real world, taunting, teasing, and creating a popular culture genre that promises to go on for another century.

## TWO OLD PUZZLES

From time to time I stumble across items in the files which have become loose ends. They lay there and do nothing for years while I deal with other matters. Then they are rediscovered with the same reaction I had had in the past, "This is strange! What should I do with it?"

The two illustrations below were supposedly copied by an unknown individual from plates in the named books. I can't find the books locally. Maybe someone out there can help? The intent of the party circulating the sketches was to infer that these were UFO-type flying machines that existed well before the first modern UFO wave of 1947.

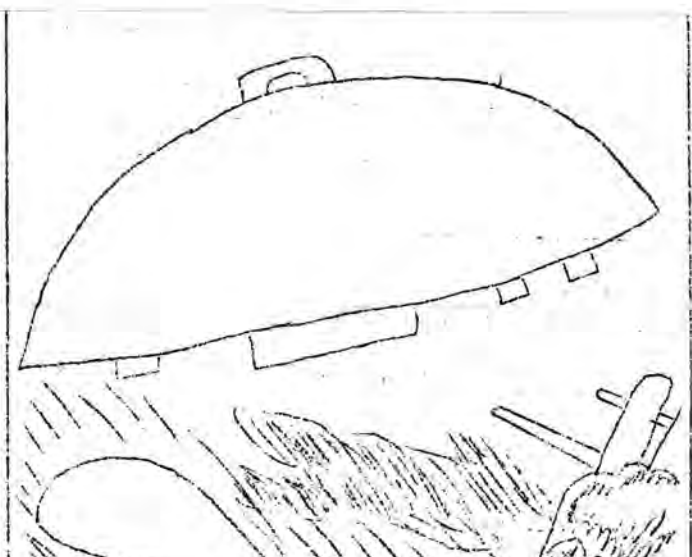
I'm not sure if they are mysterious at all. The distinct possibility exists that these were balloons related to the warfare subject matter apparent in the respective books. The books may even be fiction. If they are fiction and the drawings are accurate, then they reflect a curious, pre-modern-era expression of a flying saucer well before they



should have been in the culture's collective imagination. If the books aren't fiction, then what kinds of balloons resembled these oddly shaped devices? Or if not balloons, what were they?



THE BLACK INVASION - Driant, 1896



THE INFERNAL WAR - Mericant, 1905

## WHY DID THE 1897 AIRSHIPS IGNORE NEW ENGLAND?

On the following page is a partial collection, brief as it is, on press coverage of mysterious objects seen over New England in 1897. While reports of mysterious dirigible-shaped "airships" (the "UFO" of the Victorian era) were exploding by hundreds across the U.S. during that spring, along with an explosion of newspaper reporting on them, it was relatively quiet in the New England states. For some reason, airships stayed away from the northeastern U.S., instead replaced by sightings of so-called "Edison Electric Balloons." These alleged balloons were said to have been lofted from an Edison plant in Schenectady, N.Y., though no evidence exists that that was the case. The thinking was that Edison wanted to determine how far an electric light could cast a signal from a balloon at high altitude. Much of the reporting of the mysterious light had the sightings occurring in the western sky, contributing to the Edison theory as Schenectady is west of the New England states.

There was a better candidate however. Venus at that time was very prominent in the western sky after sunset and was most certainly responsible for most of the reports. The press coverage even offered this as the answer for the rumored electric balloons.

The curiosity of the matter is this: If Venus were in the western sky at sunset, it would be the same across the U.S. So one can conclude that Venus could have been responsible for many reports across the rest of the country, the ones that weren't obvious journalistic hoaxes as was common in the airship reporting in the papers. So if the stimulus were the same, why didn't the New England states have a similar

Boston Globe  
Apr. 16, 1897

#### THE AIR SHIP QUESTION.

The numerous reports that come from the west of the appearance of a huge airship, which it is claimed has been seen at various points, may, or may not, be well founded. But there is nothing inherently improbable in them.

Trained scientific men, who speak from well-grounded knowledge, have admitted, for a number of years, that aerial navigation is a possibility; and it has long been thought that the practical difficulties in the way of effecting it would soon be overcome. It would not be at all surprising if those practical difficulties had now in reality been solved. At any rate, if the air ship is not an actual consummation we may expect its appearance at any time.

The 19th century has been an era of unparalleled invention. If the air ship shall be invented and perfected before the close of the century it will furnish a memorable climax to an era that is already without a parallel.

Boston Globe  
April 15, 1897

#### AIRSHIP WAS A HOAX.

McCann and Friend Hung It  
From Telegraph Wires.

They Snapped Their Cameras at It and  
Phased Chicagoites.

Hoodless, Who Saw It, Proved a Hoodoo,  
for He Gave the Scheme Away.

CHICAGO, April 15.—Excitement over the visitation of the airship has not yet abated in Rogers Park. Everybody in the village was talking about it yesterday, and the little store of Walter R. McCann at Ravenswood Park and Greenleaf avs was the center of excitement. McCann is the man who got out his snapshot camera and photographed the aerial monster as it floated over the quiet suburb at a still hour Sunday morning.

He was busy all day yesterday printing photographs from the negative he made in the camera, and this morning the photographs will be on sale.

The orders he received yesterday far exceeded the capacity of his amateur studio, and it will take him a week to make all the pictures ordered.

The negative from which the pictures were made was freely exhibited to critical and skeptical visitors.

"There it is," McCann would say, with a mischievous laugh. "I'd have to be a corker at photographing to take up that, don't you think?"

One long, critical look at the plate of glass which revealed on its sensitized side the picture of the telegraph poles, and high above the row of sheds in the distance the clearly outlined form of the airship, was enough to convince the most critical.

#### THAT EXPERIMENTAL STAR.

A local astronomer was heard to remark the other day in a joking way that he had not been able to work lately, so busy was he kept answering questions about the new Edison experimental star in the western sky. This object, about which quite a little interest has been excited, has according to accounts a wide and varied distribution, and is a singular example of the lack of observation of persons unaccustomed to such work. It is two or three months since the story was spread that Edison was experimenting with electric lights, and that it was his desire to learn how far he could signal from a balloon with an electric light. Sober people of Massachusetts have watched the decline in the western sky of this marvellous and brilliant light, and know it for the planet Venus, glowing with unwonted brilliancy, its thin crescent being discerned easily by any possessor of a small telescope. But there are other places besides Boston and Milton from which the planet Venus is visible in pleasant weather, places in fact for which an experiment in New Jersey failed to furnish the proper direction or point of the compass. Of course these people in other sections had to be accommodated and the base of operations must needs be shifted so that first the town of

Pittsfield (Ma) Sun  
March 25, 1897

The present beautiful evening star, the planet Venus, will be at its greatest brilliancy next Sunday. After that it will begin to decrease in size. The remarkable beauty and brightness of this evening star the past two weeks has led to the perpetrating upon a lot of North Adams people who are not much acquainted with astronomy of quite an amusing practical joke. When the planet was lower in the sky in the early evening than it is now some one started the story that it was not a star at all, but a monster electric light sent up many miles into the air from the General Electric works at Schenectady, N. Y. The story spread all over town, and was believed by so many that men were seen on the street corners gazing "at the big light," and one man solemnly announced to his fellow workmen one morning that he had watched it for a long time the night before and it had taken twenty-five minutes to pull the light down. Some of the men who believed this story about the big electric light ought to have known better; and if they have a spare half hour they might now figure out how high up in the air above Schenectady the light must have been for it to be seen from this city barely above the Taconic mountains.—North Adams Democrat.

Maynard, Mass., was suggested as the point from which the experiments were conducted.

Finally the people of Maine found time to divert their attention from matters of politics and temperance, and with the vague rumors of the experiment and the evidence of their own eyes that the object was there, where New Jersey could never hope to be, it was necessary to evolve some other story. In its new guise it was a series of experiments made from a balloon floating a mile or two above Mount Washington, operated from its summit, and carrying signal lights which were to be read at Mount Desert. No one thought of the improbability of a winter party on our loftiest New England summit equipped with lights and balloons, and the item was soberly distributed as fact. Of course the West was not to be second in such a contest of ideas, so that the brilliant light, no longer in New Jersey or on Mount Washington, was given a new and ingenious form in the signal light of an air-ship, the predecessor of that one which is now agitating Chicago and Illinois.

Of course, everyone realizes that if Edison wished to know how far he could send a signal from a balloon, he would not even think of going to the bother and expense of getting a balloon. Any engineer would compute for him the height to which an ascent must be made so that it would not be hidden from some distant point by the curvature of the earth, and any physicist could inform him how far a light of given brightness would penetrate the atmosphere under normal conditions. The problem could be solved in two minutes, with the aid of a bit of paper and the ever-ready pencil.

Meanwhile Venus shines on undisturbed, a brilliant object in the western sky. She is more than usually bright and well repays examination and attention. A few evenings ago she was in company with the thread of the newish moon, and as one looked at them, masked and blurred as they were by the evening's haze, one might have been pardoned in thinking them strange and weird features of the sky, and in seeking some more than natural reason for their appearance.

Newburyport Daily  
News  
April 17, 1897

If there are any people on Venus and they are able to learn what is going on down here they are probably wondering what a jolly lot of easy things there are on earth when we so cheerfully accept the theory that the bright-hued planet is one of Edison's lamps hung up in the sky.

infusion of airships instead of the sporadic Edison Electric Balloon? Airships were being reported in the New England press but did not generate such reports in the area.

Was there a cultural reason for the difference? Were New Englanders more sophisticated in their interpretation of a stimulus like Venus, despite being as wrong as the rest of the country? When modern UFO waves had spread in the past, the reports would ignite in a particular locale, then develop across other areas, usually with the same kinds of reports. If flying discs were seen, flying discs would spread. If flying wings were seen, flying wings would spread. The same with flying triangles; etc.

A possible explanation for this may lie in the fact that most of Edison's experiments were taking place in the eastern part of the country. He had moved from Menlo Park, California to West Orange, New Jersey in 1886 after an extraordinarily productive period of invention. He moved from the inventive to the practical, helping to develop his inventions into devices for everyday use. Internal home lighting, power plants, movie houses, phonographs, all sprung from Edison's mind. The industrial northeast U.S. was the place to be to do this.

If Edison were working in the northeast, how could he be responsible for airships in St. Louis or Omaha or Dallas? To be sure, throughout the time that Edison lived in the east, he was blamed occasionally for the odd light in the sky now and then. Prior to the spring airship wave, reports from Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Pennsylvania and parts of Canada told of electric balloons perhaps due to Edison. They were scattered reports but it is evident of a general suspicion that Edison the genius was possibly behind some of the marvels that would appear in the sky. As time went along, suspicions abated that Edison was responsible for every airship. Aviation was developing quickly with the Wright Brothers only a few years away so others could be blamed for the apparitions.

So it seems that if lights in the sky were going to appear in 1897, by whatever stimulus, the most likely place that Edison would be blamed for them would be the northeastern U.S., given his proximity to the area at the time. Since we know Venus was in the sky during the spring of 1897, it would be reasonable to suggest that a great number of the reports outside of the New England area were embellishments. The New England reports were probably a more realistic rendering of what was being seen in Victorian skies and that there is a reason now why the 1897 clanking, lumbering airships did not aero-plod into the northeastern U.S. New Englanders were seeing the same things those elsewhere were seeing but putting less of a sensational spin on the situation, blaming their poor neighbor, Thomas Edison, for scaring the dickens out of them.

Can the popular culture of any particular area be an enormously determining factor in coloring the history of the reporting unusual events, like UFO/airship sightings? I think we can see evidence of that in this situation. It doesn't mean that scrutinizing these events is any less fun and interesting. One learns a lot about people if not about flying saucers, mysterious airships, the flying spears and shields of Roman times, or the saucer-less abductions of modern times.

Reference: THE AIRSHIP FILE by Thomas E. Bullard, private, 1982.



## A STRANGE OBJECT IN THE ARCTIC IN 1850!

Below is reproduced a direct extract in full from THE U.S. GRINNELL EXPEDITION IN SEARCH OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN by Elijah Kent Kane (New York, Harper, 1854). It is not unknown in UFO literature. However, what isn't well known about this story is that in a very early edition of this work, a plate illustrates the strange object hovering over the arctic wastes. I had seen it in a used bookstore but due to the high cost, I passed on it, thinking I could find it again. I didn't! So here is the story. The illustration exists. Can anyone find it? The object was seen on September 15, 1850.

### THE U.S. GRINNELL EXPEDITION IN SEARCH OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN - Elijah Kent Kane (New York, Harper, 1854)

"This afternoon, at 6h. 20m., a large spheroidal mass was seen floating in the air at an unknown distance to the north. It undulated for a while over the ice-lined horizon of Wellington Channel; and after a little while, another, smaller than the first, became visible a short distance below it. They receded with the wind from the southward and eastward, but did not disappear for some time. Captain De Haven at first thought it a kite; but, independently of the difficulty of imagining a kite flying without a master, and where no master could be, its outline and movement convinced me it was a balloon. The Resolute dispatched a courier balloon on the 2d; but that could never have survived the storms of the past week. I therefore suppose it must have been sent up by some English vessel to the west of us.

"I make a formal note of this circumstance, trivial as it may be; for at first Franklin rose to my mind, as possibly signaling up Wellington Channel."

Cape Hotham was at this time nearly in range, from our position, with the first headland to the west of it; and our captain estimated that we were about thirty miles from the eastern side of the strait. The balloon was to leeward, nearly due north of us, more so than could be referred to the course of the wind as we observed it, supposing it to have set out from any vessel of whose place we were aware. It appeared to me, the principal one, about two feet long by eighteen inches broad; its appendage larger than an ordinary dinner-plate. The incident interested us much at the time, and I have not seen any thing in the published journals of the English searchers that explains it.

from: HISTORY: 57<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR WING (ALASKA), January -  
June 1950.

SPECIAL SUBJECTS

Two officers and three airmen of the 625th Aircraft Control  
and Warning Squadron observed an unusual flying object at 2330  
hours (Alaskan Standard Time), 5 May 1950. Names of personnel  
who witnessed the occurrence follow:

Captain Marcellus D. O'Sullivan  
1st Lt William J. Reisinger  
Technical Sergeant Ehrle W. Peterson  
Technical Sergeant Melvin H. Dexter  
Corporal Benny Lipson

Witnesses substantially agreed upon the following description  
of the phenomenon: the object was an unusual light, reddish-  
orange in color, and of a constant intensity. After remaining  
overhead for a period of five minutes it suddenly and with  
increasing rapidity began to move in the direction of 220 degrees  
from Elmendorf on a heading of 040 degrees, disappearing over the  
horizon.

SECRET

The sky was completely overcast with the base of the clouds  
at 7000 feet; moon and stars were not visible. No sound was heard  
and no acrobatics took place. No explanation of this phenomenon  
was offered by any of the observers. 85 /

---

85 / Ltr, Hq 625th AC & W Sq, Subj: Report of Unusual Occurrence,  
to CG, 57th Ftr-Intcp Wg, dtd 8 May 50. (57th Ftr-Intcp Wg  
Intelligence Files, Elmendorf AFB, Als.) (Secret)

SECRET