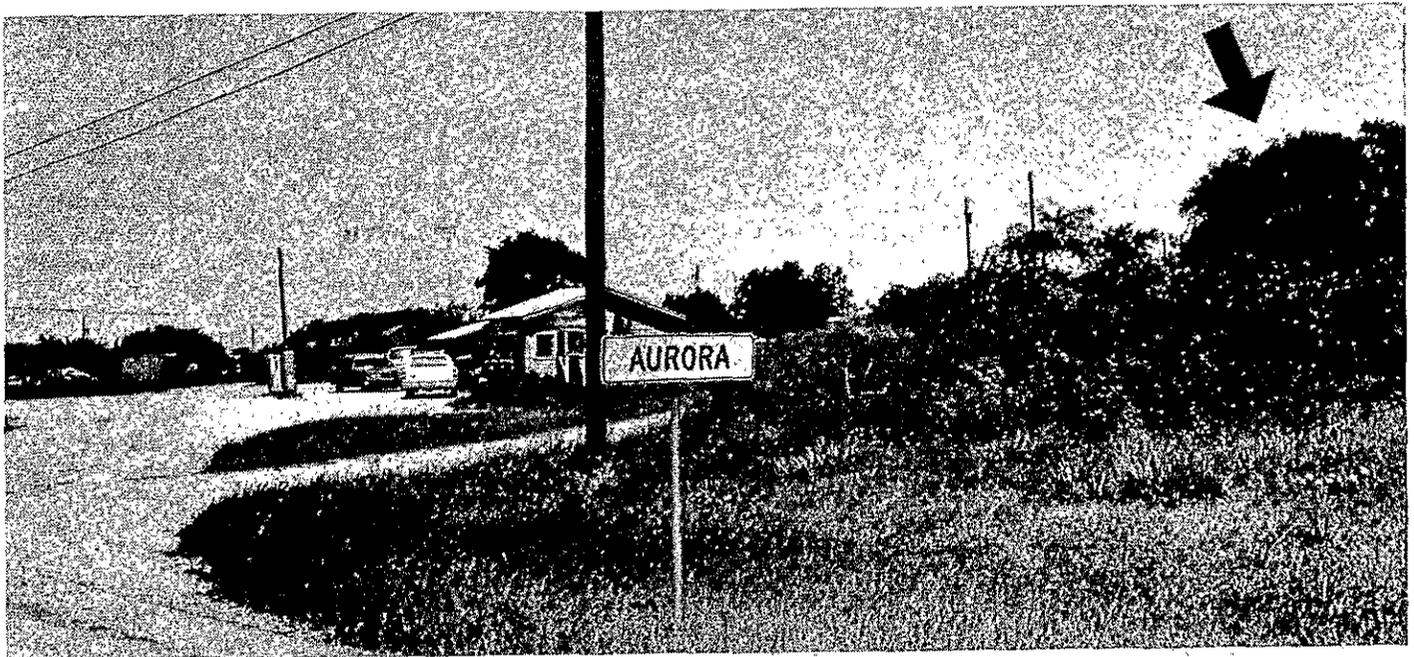


# UFO INVESTIGATOR

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
AERIAL PHENOMENA  
NICAP

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## POSSIBLE GRAVE OF 'AIRSHIP' PILOT SOUGHT IN OLD TEXAS COWTOWN



Small gas station at edge of Aurora, Texas, is owned by Brawley Oates, whose property includes grove of trees in right background (arrow) that hides old well site where strange "airship" reportedly crashed in 1897. Body of pilot was allegedly recovered at crash site. (Photo courtesy William Case)

Discovery of a grave suspected to contain the remains of an 1897 "airship" occupant has put the subject of UFOs back on the nation's front pages.

Evidence uncovered late last month indicates the alleged crash of a strange aerial device near Aurora, Texas, in April 1897 may be factual, including the reported burial of a "small man" whose dismembered body was supposedly recovered from the wreckage and interred in the Aurora cemetery.

Aviation writer William Case, of the Dallas *Times-Herald*, has reported to NICAP that his search for information on the crash has led to an obscure gravesite marked only by a small stone on which a crude drawing has been cut of an elongated object. Although partially obliterated by effects of the weather, the drawing closely resembles eyewitness descriptions of the object reported over Aurora on April 17, 1897.

According to Case, metal fragments found at the alleged crash site have been submitted to scientists in the Dallas-Fort Worth area for analysis. Preliminary results

indicate most of the samples are ordinary materials, although one remains a puzzle. Dr. Thomas Gray, a physicist at North Texas State University, says his tests have shown the unidentified sample is predominately iron and zinc. Unlike most materials containing large amounts of iron, this sample is nonmagnetic.

Early reports from Aurora indicated legal steps had been taken by an Oklahoma UFO group to exhume the body of the alleged UFO occupant, despite resistance from local residents. According to Case, these reports are inaccurate, since no legally acceptable basis for exhumation has been established.

Initial reports of the alleged crash appeared in Texas newspapers on April 19, 1897. The *Dallas Morning News* reported that early risers in Aurora on April 17 "were astonished at the sudden appearance of the airship which has been sailing throughout the country." The paper said the object was spotted about 6 a.m. coming from the south at very low altitude. It passed over the Aurora town square and

moved north towards a small hill owned by a judge named J.S. Proctor. As it traveled over Proctor's yard, it struck a wooden tower atop his well and exploded. The blast threw debris over "several acres," wrecking both the tower and the judge's flower garden. Persons who arrived at the scene found a badly disfigured body, which was moved to the Aurora cemetery a few hours later and buried on April 18.

Reportedly, one of the witnesses to the explosion was a farmer named James Stephens, whose son Charles still lives in Aurora. Now 86, "Charlie" Stephens recently told newsmen he remembers his father talking about the incident:

"It was just a big light up there, and he seen it and didn't know what it was. He said, 'I'm going to Aurora in the morning and see...' They were scared to death; they didn't know what it was. They thought the world was coming to an end. My daddy often took me up there in a wagon. I can show you within 20 feet of where that

(See Grave, Page 3)

## Some Witnesses Report They Are Followed

# Sighting 'Flap' Continues in S.C.

- \* Four red and yellow lights flying in formation
- \* A circular-shaped object which appears to rotate
- \* Three cylindrical-shaped UFOs led by a larger, egg-shaped UFO
- \* A glowing, white triangular-shaped UFO
- \* A glowing object with antenna-like devices on its side and a window near its top

These are the types of reports that are causing local residents to turn out in record numbers, night after night, in Cherokee County, S. C., in hopes that they too can catch a glimpse of the phenomenon which has captured the imagination and interest of this rural area since mid-winter.

The rash of UFO sightings in Cherokee County began in January (*UFO Investigator*, April 1973) when hundreds of local citizens began reporting strange sightings on almost a nightly basis.

Descriptions of the sightings have ranged from faint lights on the horizon to detailed reports involving objects observed at close range.

At present, no satisfactory explanation has been offered by anyone regarding the hundreds of reports. At one point, local police declared the sightings were becoming so numerous that they had ceased sending out patrol cars to investigate.

According to one local newspaper, local citizens in cars, pick-ups, and even camper trucks, some of them packing sandwiches and coffee, line the roadsides and hilltops or travel the isolated country roads, trying to glimpse one of the "strange flying objects."

A number of residents have reported that their cars have been followed by brilliant white lights. In one case, a couple reported they were followed on two different occasions during one week, Feb. 13 and 16. On the second occasion, one of the objects flew so close to the auto that the woman said her husband exclaimed, "Well this is it! They're coming to pick us up!"

Another family reported they observed four objects on Feb. 18 swoop down just above the tree tops, as though they were going to land. The UFOs made a wide sweeping turn, climbed into the sky and headed toward the Draytonville area. The witnesses claimed they could detect a humming sound apparently coming from the objects as they lifted off.

Another local resident, according to local newspaper accounts, said he was close enough "to observe the objects' superstructures or fuselages." He said the

three smaller objects were cylindrical-shaped, while the larger UFO was egg-shaped. According to the man, they had rotating or flashing lights around them. The witness also reported a whining sound, similar to that of an electric motor, as the UFOs passed an estimated 300 feet over his head.

On still another occasion, four residents of Draytonville reported seeing a "glowing, white triangular-shaped object" land on a hillside in a pasture. A second UFO was sighted hovering above the one on the ground. A few minutes later, according to witnesses, the objects turned red and lifted off.

More recently, some witnesses have also reported a triangular-shaped UFO, with "yellow lights all over it and a red light on the back." The object stopped, hovered awhile, reversed its course, and disappeared as if its lights had been turned off.

A resident of Blacksburg said she saw a silver, cigar-shaped object traveling in a northeasterly direction early one morning.

Although most of the sightings have been concentrated in the Draytonville area, virtually all areas of Cherokee County have produced UFO reports, including Macedonia, Beaverdam, White Plains, Asbury-Rehoboth, Sarratt, Corinth, Cashion Crossroads, and many other communities.

Conventional explanations, ranging from helicopters to weather balloons and airplane landing lights, have been offered by some, but most local residents are reluctant to accept them.

## Parishioners Spot UFO after Service

At least 12 members of the Mt. Calvary Methodist Church in Canton, Ohio, remain puzzled about the "unidentified something" they spotted darting above eastern Stark County on March 14, 1973.

According to the *Canton Repository*, the object was first spotted by some church members driving home around 9:30 p.m. from an evening service at the church. Unknown to the first group of witnesses, other parishioners, including the church's pastor, Rev. Johannes Mass, were also observing the UFO at approximately the same time.

Rev. Mass and his wife said they were sitting in the living room of their home at the church when they saw red and white flashing lights through their window. They thought at first it was an airplane but then noticed it remained stationary. They estimated it to be 1,000 to (See Parishioners, Page 4)

## Pilot Chases UFO in Private Plane

A commercial pilot with more than 5,000 hours flying time claims he chased a "circular-shaped" UFO for several miles over Farmington, Mo., on April 12, 1973 before it disappeared at a high rate of speed.

The pilot, Kenneth Pingel, was returning to Farmington Airport with another experienced pilot, Marvin Colyer, in a single engine Piper Cherokee about 10:30 p.m. when he claims he first spotted a strange light off the left wing tip.

According to Pingel, the UFO was a bright, white-colored object, circular in shape, which appeared at times to take on an orange tinge. "It did not appear to spin," he said.

The object, according to the pilot, appeared to pace the plane as it was cruising at 150 mph at 3,500 feet about 20 miles north of Farmington. The UFO, said Pingel, seemed to give off heat waves "like the kind you see on highways during a hot day."

"We flew our traffic pattern and were about to land on the north runway. We were making our final approach when we both saw the object which appeared to give off a beam of white light," Pingel said.

Pingel, thinking the object had entered (See Pilot, Page 4)

## Piedmont 'Lights' Investigated by Missouri Professor

A physics professor at Southeast Missouri State University is seeking additional funds to continue his investigation of the hundreds of UFO sightings which have occurred in or around Piedmont, Mo., since mid-February (*UFO Investigator*, May 1973).

"I'm studying the lights from a scientific point of view," said Professor Harley D. Rutledge, head of the university's physics department. Rutledge is currently heading a team of faculty members investigating the UFO sightings and has been provided some funds and the use of an automobile to conduct his study.

"If we can get the funding to hire students trained in the physical sciences, we can establish several observation posts at night," Rutledge explained.

Preliminary findings have indicated that some of the strange lights reported in the Piedmont area appear to have followed flight paths which coincide with radio beams used by pilots for navigation, according to the professor.

Two of the beams, according to the professor, intersect at a location where (See Professor, Page 4)

# Grave

(Continued from Page 1)

thing crashed. It was all burned around there."

Stephens added that his father did not see the object prior to the explosion and did not view the wreckage until the following day. Stephens said he did not recall his father saying anything about a body.

In the last week of May, Case located a 91-year-old woman, Mrs. Mary Evans, who lived in Aurora in 1897 and claims to remember the day the crash occurred. A teenager at the time, Mrs. Evans told Case her parents visited the scene of the wreck and saw the body but would not allow her to go with them. Her parents described the man as about four feet tall.

The property where Proctor lived has been owned for the past 26 years by Brawley Oates, who now runs a small gas

who normally rules on such matters, would not likely approve a petition without additional evidence that exhumation would be justified. Many of the graves in the cemetery contain the bodies of children stricken in a typhoid epidemic that hit the Aurora area the same year of the supposed crash.

The Aurora sighting was only one of many alleged observations of an airship traveling over Texas and other parts of the country in April 1897. Most accounts described the object as shaped like a dirigible and powered by two propeller-type engines, one on each side of the object. Some witnesses said the airship had a rotating blade on top, portholes on the underside, and a bright light at the front. It was reported to move at an estimated speed of 10-12 miles per hour.

The gravestone drawing discovered by Case shows a rough outline of what appears to be a cigar-shaped device with o-

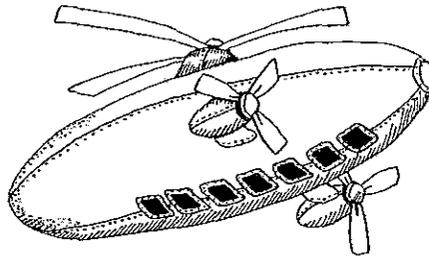
with no inscription. It was among those stolen by vandals.

In mid May, a man who gave his name as Frank N. Kelley appeared at the Oates' property and took readings in the chicken yard with a metal detector. He unearthed various metal fragments in mounds of dirt and told newsmen, "In more than 25 years of recovering metal...I've never seen metal like that." Newsmen who later tried to contact Kelley discovered the address he had given them was fictitious. Sources in Corpus Christi, Texas, where Kelley said he lived, also reported no record of such a person. Kelley described himself as a treasure hunter and geologist.

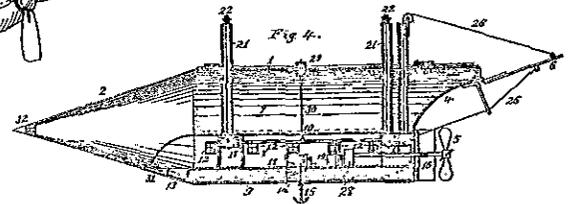
The Aurora case is reminiscent of the incident that occurred near Alamosa, Colorado, in September 1967, when the remains of a horse named Snippy were discovered on a desert ranch. Speculation that Snippy had been killed by a UFO



Gravestone at site where "airship" pilot may be buried shows vague outline of what could be front half of ship. Circles could be windows or other structural features. Outline has been sketched over with chalk to make it easier to photograph. (Photo courtesy William Case)



Artist's sketch of "airship" reported over various towns during April 1897 shows dirigible-like construction and prop-type engines. Object that crashed at Aurora was reportedly made of "unknown metal resembling mixture of aluminum and silver." (Art courtesy Southern Living)



In summer of 1896, California inventor Charles A. Smith was granted patent for this airship design, which used screw-propeller and internal engine. Patent application said ship would be made of "aluminum alloy" and filled with "hydrogen or other gas." (Art courtesy U.S. Patent Office)

station on it. Oates reports he helped seal the old well in 1945, along with the local marshall, H.R. Idell, and a nephew. The site is presently occupied by a chicken yard, with the former well housing being used as a coop. The metal fragments removed for analysis were dug up from the well site and yard.

The Aurora cemetery is owned by a small association of local citizens, who are anxiously trying to protect the property from souvenir hunters. Since late March, when the Oklahoma group announced plans to seek an exhumation order, 20 tombstones have been stolen and other vandalism reported. The association has been forced to post guards at the site and may seek a court injunction to keep out the continuing string of visitors.

Because of the vandalism and other disruptions caused by the publicity, most of Aurora's small population is opposed to any attempt at exhumation. Since the exact gravesite, if not the entire crash story, is still in question, the local county judge,

openings on the bottom and a structural feature at the nose. Case says the stone has been broken and does not contain the complete drawing. No trace has been found of the missing section.

In 1897, balloon technology was well advanced, and motor-driven dirigibles had been successfully flown in Europe. Although no evidence exists that inventors had developed powered airships in the United States as early as 1897, it is known that a patent for a self-propelled dirigible had been granted by the U.S. Patent Office in 1896 and a device of this kind was developed in Texas near the turn of the century. It is a matter of speculation whether unrecorded experimental flights could account for some of the airship sightings.

Prior to Case's discovery of the gravesite, the Oklahoma group had selected another burial plot as the probable location of the alleged pilot's grave. The exact spot they chose was among other graves known to have been dug in the late 1890s. The only marker at the spot was a small rock

brought news reporters on the run and triggered a spate of headlines that still turn up in books on UFOs. Investigators eventually determined that Snippy most likely died from an apparent infection associated with two bullet wounds in its hindquarters. Snippy's skeleton is presently on display in an Alamosa pottery shop.

Aurora, Texas, unlike Alamosa, is a virtual ghost town, located some 30-odd miles northwest of Fort Worth in rural country. In 1897, it boasted a population of 3000 and was a busy stop on the old Chisholm Trail. Cotton buyers and cattlemen frequented its 15 saloons, generating enough news to support a local paper. Some present citizens of Aurora have suggested the airship report was a joke cooked up by railroad men, possibly as a stimulus to business. Other skeptics point to a 19th-century news correspondent named S.E. Hayden, whose financial interest in the cotton trade may have prompted him to indulge in fanciful public relations for Aurora. Hayden wrote a story about the Aurora crash.



MEMOS  
FOR  
MEMBERS

## TWO GOOFS IN MAY ISSUE

Two errors crept into last month's newsletter, the first on page 1, the second on page 2. The map on page 1 shows a sighting at Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania, that should have been shown at Phillipsburg, New Jersey. The latter town is immediately across the Delaware River from Easton, Pa. The sighting at Phillipsburg occurred March 21, the same night of an observation at Riegelsville, Pa., five miles south of Easton. Our thanks to NICAP member Susan O'Neil who caught the mistake. The second error is the placement of the sketch on page 2, which should have been shown with the Rhode Island story, not the Oregon story. The sketch shows an object reported by a man in Bradford, R. I., who said he saw it on the evening of February 10 near his home.

## KEYHOE BOOK DUE THIS YEAR

*Aliens from Space* is the title of Major Donald Keyhoe's latest book on UFOs, now set for publication in November. Thirteen years in the making (*UFO Investigator*, August 1972), the new book promises to be Keyhoe's strongest statement on the UFO controversy. It will be published by Doubleday.

## FEEDBACK/Readers write

Dear Editor:

The intent of this letter is to estimate the frequency range that was used by the UFO which was reported on page 2 of the February 1973 newsletter. Assuming that those protrusions were an antenna system, then the cross-pole/wire is the antenna. I was informed by the NICAP office that the object's apparent size was estimated by one of the witnesses to be 6 inches wide by 8 to 10 inches long at arm's length. The distance from the object was estimated to be 200 to 300 feet by the woman and 200 to 1000 feet by the man. From these data, I have calculated the craft's width to be from 86 to 429 feet. The length of the antenna, as estimated from the witness's sketch, was about 0.8 of the width. The length of the antenna determines the frequency of the electromagnetic waves that were used; i.e. a voltage-feed antenna is .5w, 1w, etc. Therefore, the longest w which was used is four times the length of the antenna. By using the formula,  $velocity\ of\ light = w \times frequency$  ( $c = wf$ ), the smallest center frequency used was 708 KHz at a distance of 200 feet or 3.6 MHz at a distance of 1000 feet.

The standard observer can easily exaggerate the size of an object using this method of estimating (i.e. arm's length). For example, a full moon may be estimated to be .5 inch in diameter at arm's length; in reality it is about .25 inch. This is an exaggeration factor of 2 to 1. Taking this into account the lowest frequency would be 1416 KHz or 1.4 MHz at 200 feet. However, it would be more feasible to say the object was 86 feet wide using a lowest frequency of 7.2 MHz. This frequency band would fall in the shortwave and police bands.

Sincerely,  
A. J. Haspert, Jr.  
Hyattsville, Md.

Dear Editor:

Regarding a point in the *Investigator*, April 1973: In the "Q/A" column, in the "men-in-black" reply by NICAP, it was stated that John A. Keel's book *Strange Creatures from Time and Space* had "implied that the men in black were visitors from outer space." I've read all three of his books on the subject, and nowhere does he state that that is the case. Mr. Keel did say that the men in black sometimes resemble and/or behave [like] certain reported UFO occupants. But I'm sure that Mr. Keel would point out that there is no evidence that the UFO occupants, UFOs, or the "MIB" come from outer space.

Sincerely,  
David A. Krouse  
Wallingford, Pa.

*Editor Replies: Mr. Krouse misquotes NICAP's statement. It actually reads: "The book had implied the man was a visitor from outer space." This refers to a specific incident described by Keel, which occurred in 1967 in West Virginia. According to Keel, a witness in a UFO case was visited by a mysterious "Mr. Brown" who was "dressed in a thin black suit, with a black tie, and looked Oriental...All of the people who met him felt very uneasy about him." A man claiming to be "Mr. Brown" telephoned NICAP in 1972 to protest Keel's description of what happened. The caller said he had gone to West Virginia solely out of personal curiosity after reading UFO stories in the newspaper. He did not, he claimed, attempt to act mysterious. In the book, Keel concluded: "Who or what was Mr. Brown? Some UFO buffs might conclude that he was really a spy from the CIA playing pointless games with honest American taxpayers. But from the general description of his features and his erratic behavior he sounds more like one of the mischievous idiots who pop out of flying saucers." As to whether Keel feels UFO occupants come from outer space, the title of his book clearly implies he does.*

Pilot

(Continued from Page 2)

the plane's flight path, accelerated and pulled the plane out of its landing ap-

proach. "It looked like it was moving at us at a high rate of speed, so I pulled back up and flew toward it. It immediately stopped, reversed its direction and flew away from us at a high rate of speed."

According to Pingel, he chased the object at 140 mph for several miles before it disappeared.

"We're both qualified for night operations and I've flown many nights under all kinds of conditions. This was definitely not a star or any kind of airplane and until someone explains to me what it is, I guess I'll have to say I saw a UFO," Pingel said.

Other residents of Farmington also reported seeing the strange light that night, according to local newspaper reports.

Professor

(Continued from Page 2)

many of the "mysterious lights" have been seen.

Rutledge himself has observed the lights and described one of them as "a white light, brighter than any of the stars, which did not appear to have any shape." He said it passed in front of him and his companions, heading from north to south, at an angle of 10 degrees, and was visible about three minutes.

A check with the FAA, said the professor, found no airplane flights recorded over the area at the time in question.

Equipment currently being used by the professor and his team includes radios, cameras, light spectrum and polarization and measurement equipment. Radar and sound detector devices will be added as the investigation continues, said the professor.

Parishioners

(Continued from Page 2)

1,500 feet away, across a small valley from their home, and either on or just above the ground.

According to Rev. Mass, he and his wife figured the craft must have been circular or saucer-shaped because of the position of red and white flashing lights which were observed around the object. They ruled out a "helicopter" because of subsequent fantastic speeds and maneuvers and the complete lack of any sound, said the pastor.

Other parishioners, on learning of Rev. Mass's sighting, gave similar accounts of seeing a mysterious object with lights darting about or hovering over various sections of the county as the witnesses were driving home on the night in question, according to the *Repository*.