

**UFO FILES**  
**Texas' Roswell**

The History Channel, Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup>  
February, 2006



The History Channel's series, *UFO Files*, has done *Britain's Roswell*, *Mexico's Roswell* and now *Texas' Roswell*. I wonder if they'll get round to doing *Roswell's Roswell*?

This was another extremely interesting program about, much like the *Mexico's Roswell* show, an almost unknown UFO crash story. Despite it being relatively unknown, the incident was made into a movie in 1986, entitled *The Aurora Encounter* (no, I've not seen it either!). What marks this story apart, though, is that this account of a UFO crash and recovery of an alien corpse dates from 1897, fifty years before the 'modern' age of ufology began.

On 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1897, what was described as an 'airship' was seen in skies above the small town of Aurora, Texas. According to newspaper reports at the time, it was described as silver and cigar-shaped. At about 6am, it struck a windmill tower on land owned by a

local judge and exploded, sending debris flying in all directions.

The object had been sighted flying over Texas earlier, but when it reached Aurora, it was lower than it had ever been and trailing smoke. Judge J.S. Proctor's flower garden was destroyed – a tragedy to be sure! Locals raced to the site and found debris scattered over several acres. They also found a body that was described as being small in stature, almost child-like, and not of this world.



A local US Army officer, T.J. Weems, described as an authority on astronomy, gave his opinion that the pilot of the craft was from the planet Mars. The alien was given a decent, Christian burial in the local cemetery beneath a small gravestone and fragments of the craft were collected up and tossed down the well on Judge Proctor's land.

As far as the townsfolk of Aurora were concerned, that was the end of the story and it soon became part of local myth, with some believing that it never happened in the first place.

When Wallace O. Chariton, author of *The Great Texas Airship Mystery*,

began researching the case, he expected it to be big news at the time, but was surprised to find the story buried inside the Dallas Morning News on page five. In fact, in that particular edition, some two days after the Aurora incident, there were at least sixteen 'airship' reports.

From late in 1896, 'airships' were reported in over twenty US states and from April to May of 1897, there were reports from over thirty counties in Texas alone. These craft were reported as travelling at hundreds of miles per hour, sometimes with lights displayed and performing angular manoeuvres. Remember this was about six years before the Wright brothers made their first powered flight at Kitty Hawk. Hot-air balloons were not uncommon in those days, but none of them matched the descriptions, speed or manoeuvrability of this cigar-shaped 'airships'. Patents had been registered for a few airship designs, but it is thought that none of them were flying and certainly they would have been incapable of the aerial feats described by witness reports.

Researchers like Chariton and Hayden Hewes, founder of the International UFO Bureau, found that many of the 'airship' witnesses from all over the United States were well-respected, credible people, from doctors to senators.

After the Aurora crash, 'airship' sightings suddenly ended and many began to believe that it was all part of some elaborate hoax.

In 1973, Hayden Hewes, spurred by an article about the Aurora crash from journalist Bill Case, arrived in the small, Texan town, hoping to find clues still lingering after seventy-six years. What he found was a town that was almost indifferent to the claims. Sometimes they would respond to questioning, often they would refuse to speak about the incident at all. Of course, actual eyewitnesses were a little thin on the ground. Sometimes, Hewes' team was allowed into the cemetery and sometimes they were barred from entering. He found it most frustrating.

Researcher Jim Marrs managed to get accounts from people that were alive at the time of the incident. Most of them were in their eighties by this time. One of his interviewees declared that the crash was a hoax, however it turned out that she had not been present at the time and had overheard her father saying it was a hoax after hearing of the incident.

Mary Evans saw the crash occur as a child, but her parents forbade her from going to the impact site.



Charlie Stephens was ten-years old when he saw the object fly overhead, trailing smoke and seemingly 'in

trouble'. As it disappeared from sight, he heard an explosion and saw smoke rising into the sky. He wanted to go investigate, but his father ordered him to finish his chores. Such was parental discipline in those halcyon days...

Charlie's father rode into town the next day and told him about the wreckage that had been lying about.

Brawley Oates purchased the land where the crash allegedly occurred in 1945. He found that the well that they wanted drinking water from was filled with metal and debris. Subsequently, he developed terrible arthritis in his joints, so bad that they swelled up to the size of golf balls. He told Jim Marrs that he believed radiation from the crash debris that was dumped into his well was the cause of his condition. Oates sealed up the well with an eight-foot by eight-foot concrete slab, leaving it completely inaccessible to researchers.

Undaunted, investigators scoured the crash site with metal detectors. Mostly they dug up old, rusty nails, bolts and other artefacts normal for rural America, but one chunk of silver metal was unlike anything they had found before.



The metallic lump was tested at an aerospace laboratory in 1973, almost immediately after being discovered and found to contain 95% pure aluminium and 5% iron. Normally when an aluminium and iron alloy is formed, the amount of iron generally amounts to less than one percent. Also, zinc is usually found at the same time. No zinc was found in the Aurora artefact.

John Schuessler, of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), next took the sample to the Anastas Labs in Houston, Texas and the previous results were confirmed. Further tests showed that the metal had been molten at some point and then cooled on the ground.



Several pieces of metal arrived on Dr Tom Gray's desk at Kansas State University, allegedly from the Aurora crash. One was a large, spoked object and the others were small, dark, metallic strips. Dr Gray recognised the large object as a part from a water pump, made from mundane materials.

The dark strips, however, were more perplexing. Dr Gray's tests showed that they were primarily iron, but they were unaffected by magnetism. He

later found out that iron/zinc alloys can be either magnetic or non-magnetic, depending on how they are cooled. He explained this to the university newspaper, but their story failed to mention this, focussing on the 'abnormal' nature of the metal strips.

Finding no more pieces of debris, investigators turned their attention to the Aurora cemetery. They began searching for evidence of the supposed grave site of the deceased alien and were eventually told to look for an old, gnarled oak tree with a beehive. They looked around for the small stone that had been placed on the grave. It was said to have had an etching of the 'airship' on its surface. When they found the stone, metal detector readings were identical to what they had recorded at the site where the piece of silver debris had been found. This suggested that as well as the alien corpse, some crash debris was also interred there.



The investigators asked for permission to exhume the contents of the grave, but they were refused and eventually ejected from the site. When they were finally able to return to the cemetery, they found that the stone marker was gone and

a tube or cylinder had been driven into the grave and whatever was down there had been literally sucked out of the ground. Metal detector readings now came up negative.

With any physical evidence now gone, sceptics began explaining away the entire episode as a hoax. They claimed that the original story, by S.E. Haydon was a concoction, a practical joke. Haydon was reputed to be a notorious prankster, but Jim Marrs claimed that he found no evidence of Haydon ever writing a joke story. Wallace Chariton found it odd, though, that if the story was true, then why did Haydon not follow it up?

Barbara Brammer, the mayor of Aurora, dug into local records and found that a series of disasters befell the town in the years prior to the crash story. A terrible fire claimed many lives and an outbreak of spotted fever decimated the population. Times were bleak for Aurora. Then it was hoped that the railroad would be built through the town, injecting it with much-needed income, but the railroad never came and the spirits of the townsfolk were crushed. Was the 'airship' crash story created to bring fame to this dying, little town?

Whether true or not, one thing both believers and sceptics can agree upon is that the story of the Aurora 'airship' crash is a good one. While Aurora's population may have dwindled from over three thousand to a little fewer than four hundred, it has become famous around the

world in the UFO community for this tale.

All that remains in the town to mark the crash is a brief mention on a memorial stone in the cemetery, erected in 1976.



In 2005, Hayden Hewes was told of a bare patch of ground close to the old well where the crash debris was said to have been dumped.

Investigating the claim, Hewes found the site and, indeed, there is a large patch of ground where plants seem to have difficulty growing. It is next to the well, but unfortunately, the well is now located in a fenced-off area on private land with no access. Yet again, research is foiled.

If the owners of the land ever allowed the well to be searched, they could find themselves holding possibly the most important discovery of modern times.

*UFO Files* again has brought into focus another important case that might well have lingered in myth forever. It also shows that UFOs are not the preserve of the late twentieth century and that sightings and incidents have come to us from down through the ages.

The next episode of *UFO Files* will focus on 'Russia's Roswell', at the top-secret Kapustin Yar military base, where UFOs and aliens are said to have been taken for almost fifty years after World War II. It seems that everywhere in the world has its own Roswell!

*The images used are the property of the copyright holders and are only used here for review purposes.*

© Steve Johnson - 2006