

# Was There a <sup>1865</sup> Roswell

in

1865?

by W. Ritchie Benedict

*Long before  
the famous 1947  
New Mexico  
incident,  
UFOs were  
falling from  
North America's skies.*

**W**hen I started researching back issues of Canadian newspapers on microfilm I didn't expect to discover anything out of the ordinary. However, I found much more than I bargained for.

I had agreed to undertake the research task for well-known Toronto author John Robert Colombo, who has published a number of popular books on the paranormal (*Mysterious Canada*, *UFOs Over Canada*, *Dark Visions*, and *Mysterious Encounters*). I began searching through old newspapers and I found them to be rich with unusual material, which made the task both fascinating and addictive. There are literally hundreds of references to everything from ghosts to lake monsters to spontaneous human combustion.

One afternoon, I stumbled upon an article that literally took my breath away. I was ploughing through a difficult reel featuring newspapers from the Niagara Falls region for 1865, when I came upon the headline, "Remarkable Discovery if True" (displaying a typical nineteenth-century skepticism toward anything that smacked of a tall tale). I knew all the modern lore about UFO crashes, but still I could not believe what I had found. I continued at the top of the next column, upset to discover the last few paragraphs obscured by age and wear. I wondered whether a computer enhancement might clarify the rest of it, but I couldn't imagine anyone taking the time and expense to do so. Knowing I didn't have the resources to try that, I decided instead to locate all of the remaining reels for 1865 to see if another newspaper had carried the same article.



In 1865, western Canada was a howling wilderness with small settlements on Vancouver Island and in the Red River Valley, but eastern Canada, like the U.S., had a number of well-established dailies. On my second try, I hit paydirt, finding a clear, sharp copy in the *British Daily Whig* for Kingston, Ontario, dated November 15, 1865. My hands shook as I carried the reel to photocopy, almost as if I expected it to vanish in a puff of smoke. Luckily, it didn't. Here, in its entirety, is the article:

### **An Extraordinary Story A Meteoric Shower Crockery Falling from the Sky**

(Note: As crockery generally refers to cups and saucers, this may be the very first reference to "saucers" in the sky.)

The *Missouri Democrat* of a recent date tells the following story:

"Mr. James Lumley, an old Rocky Mountain trapper, who has been stopping at the Everett House for several days, makes a most remarkable statement to us, and one which, if authenticated, will produce the greatest excitement in the scientific world.

"Mr. Lumley states that about the middle of last September, he was engaged in trapping in the mountains about seventy-five or one hundred miles from the Great Falls of the Upper Missouri, and in the neighborhood of what is known as Cadotte Pass. After sunset one evening, he beheld a bright luminous body in the heavens, which moved with great rapidity in an easterly direction. Visible for at least five seconds, when it suddenly separated into particles, resembling, as Mr. Lumley describes it, 'the bursting of a sky-rocket in the air.' A few minutes later, he heard a heavy explosion, which jarred the earth perceptibly, and this was shortly followed by a rushing sound, like a tornado sweeping through the forest. A strong wind sprang up about the same time, but suddenly subsided. Filling the air with peculiar odors of a sulphurous nature. These incidents would make a slight impression on the mind of Mr.

Lumley, but for the fact that on the ensuing day he discovered, at the distance of about two miles from his camping place, he could see in either direction a wide path had been cut through the forest. Giant trees uprooted and broke off near the ground. The tops of hills shaved off and the earth plowed up in many places. Great and wide-spread havoc is everywhere visible. Following up this track of desolation, he soon ascertained the cause of it in the shape of an immense stone driven into the side of a mountain. The most remarkable part of the story is an examination of this stone and how it had been divided into compartments. In several places it was carved with hieroglyphics. Mr. Lumley also discovered fragments of a substance resembling glass, and here and there dark stains, as though caused by a liquid. He is confident that the hieroglyphics are the work of human hands, and the stone itself, is a fragment of an immense body, must have been used for some purpose by animated beings.

"Strange as this story appears, Mr. Lumley relates it with so much sincerity that we are forced to accept it as true. It is evident that the stone which he discovered, is a fragment of the meteor which was visible in this section last September. The stone will be remembered in Leavenworth, Galena and in this city by Col. Bonneville. At Leavenworth the stone separated into particles and exploded.

"Astronomers have long held that it is probable that the heavenly bodies are inhabited — even the comets — and it may be that the meteors are also. Meteors could be used as a conveyance by the inhabitants of other planets in exploring space, and it may be that hereafter some future Columbus, from Mercury or Uranus, may land on this planet by means of a meteoric conveyance, and take possession thereof — as did the Spanish navigators of the New World in 1492, and eventually drive what is known as the "human race" into a condition of the most

abject servitude. There must be a race superior to us, and this may at some future time be demonstrated in the manner we have indicated."

### **Deciphering the Democrat**

What are we to make of this article in light of what we know in the late twentieth century? Nineteenth-century accounts of UFO crashes are not unknown, but many of the details suggest hoaxes or tall tales. On June 6, 1884, the *Nebraska Nugget* published a story of a cylindrical object that crashed on the prairie and left bits of machinery and gear wheels behind, glowing from the heat. Former FATE editor and author Jerome Clark believes this to be a hoax, and I tend to agree. The tip-off appears to be the reference to "gear wheels," which is a typical example of the Victorian fascination with machinery.

Another famous, or infamous, crash, depending on your point of view, is the Aurora, Texas, incident of April 17, 1897. Supposedly, an airship containing a lone occupant flew over the town and hit a windmill on the property of one Judge Proctor. Though widely believed to be a concocted story, there are some people who feel an unusual event did occur. The remains of the pilot were said to have been buried in the local cemetery and marked with a stone. A recent book, *Alien Agenda*, by Jim Marrs discusses some interesting points about the case and even contains a photograph of the grave marker, which vanished in the 1970s.

I searched for contemporary references to either of these incidents and found absolutely nothing. So, why do I believe the *Niagara Mail* and *Kingston Whig* articles are authentic? First of all, they are so old. Lee had surrendered to General Grant at Appatatomox and Lincoln had been assassinated barely six months earlier. Jules Verne had yet to write *From the Earth to the Moon*, and all of Europe was ruled by monarchs. Nothing was known about how the forces of re-entry would blacken and char any space vehicle. In fact, the only method of air transportation was



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the hot air balloon. I was a little chagrined to note that the name of the witness was "Lumley." This was a little too close to the "William Loosley" fraud, perpetrated by British physicist David Langford in 1979. In her book *UFO Retrievals*, British author Jenny Randles exposed the story as a spoof. Even Langford, in an article in the *Fortean Times*, admits the story he dreamed up has developed a life of its own.

Bearing all this in mind, it might be instructive to compare highlights of the Kingston article with known aspects of the Roswell crash of 1947, as reported by Kevin D. Randle and Donald R. Schmitt in *The Truth About the UFO Crash at Roswell*:

## Kingston Article

1. "Just after sunset one evening he beheld a bright luminous body in the heavens, which was moving with great rapidity in an easterly direction."

2. "It was visible for at least five seconds, when it suddenly separated into particles, resembling, as Mr. Lumley describes it, the bursting of a skyrocket in the air."

3. "A few minutes later he heard a heavy explosion, which jarred the earth very perceptibly, and this was shortly after followed by a rushing sound, like a tornado sweeping through the forest."

4. "A path had been cut through the forest several rods wide, giant trees uprooted or broken off near the ground — the tops of hills shaved off and the earth plowed up in many places."

5. "The shape of an immense stone had been driven into the side of a mountain."

6. "An examination of this stone, or so much of it as was visible showed that it had been divided into compartments, in that in various places it was carved with hieroglyphics."

(Note: Puzzling hieroglyphics have been a feature of a number of UFO crash retrieval incidents, including Aurora, Texas, Roswell, and the 1965 Kecksburg, Pennsylvania, crash.)

7. "Mr. Lumley also discovered

fragments of a substance resembling glass, and here and there dark stains, as though caused by a liquid."

## Roswell Incident

1. South of Roswell, William Woody was watching the night sky with his father when he spotted a white light with red streaks in it.

2. Fifteen miles southwest of the base, Corporal E. L. Pyles (who was on a detached facility) looked up to see what he thought at first was a shooting star, but larger. It moved across the sky and then arced downward. There seemed to be an orange glow around it, a halo near the front.

3. During a thunderstorm near Corona, New Mexico, W. W. "Mac" Brazel heard a tremendous thunderclap that sounded like an explosion, but was somehow different from the rest of the thunder. Others in the area reported the same phenomenon.

4. Brazel took the two military officers out to the crash site. It was three-quarters of a mile long and two to three hundred feet wide. A gouge starting at the northern end of the site extended for four or five hundred feet.

5. They drove across the rocky terrain and stopped at the edge of a short cliff. They saw the remains of the ship stuck in the side of the cliff but could see no movement around it.

6. "Marcel (Major Jesse) said, 'We found some metal, small bits of metal. We picked it up.' He also described I-beam-like structures. Though unbendable and unbreakable, they did not look metallic. He also noticed "undecipherable," two-color markings along the length of some of the beams. "Two-color markings...like Chinese writing. Nothing you could make sense of."

7. Finally, there were the wirelike pieces that Bill Brazel described as flexible. He said he could shine a light in one end and it would come out the other, no matter how he twisted the wire around. This sounds suspiciously like fiber optics.

## Conclusions

Is it credible that two cases closely resembling each other should be found over 80 years apart? There is no doubt the Kingston article exists. Anyone can walk into any archive or library across Canada and look it up, provided you know where to find it. With the information mentioned, it should be possible for some enterprising researcher to find further confirmation. I made a few stabs at this myself, but I have had no results to date. It has even been difficult to decide to whom and how this data should be presented. I have not wanted to slight any of my friends in the UFO community by favoring one over another.

Whatever happened that September night 133 years ago, it was most definitely not the crash of a Mogul weather balloon, or a Japanese secret weapon. If Roswell itself was merely a misinterpreted event, then how do you explain this one? I doubt the Lincoln-Johnson Administration had a cover-up policy.

True, there are no alien bodies, but, hey, you can't have everything (moreover, I would be suspicious if that was claimed). It should be remembered that, like the crash site at Roswell, the one on the Brazel ranch was mostly a gouge and debris. The main body of the object crashed elsewhere, as well may have been the case in Missouri. It has long been observed that the state of Missouri is a hotbed of UFO activity with sightings going back to at least the 1890s.

The final question remaining is whether any of the is debris still awaiting discovery today after more than a century. I think many years of climatic upheavals and land changes have probably buried any evidence for good. This Civil War-era article may be the only evidence of North America's oldest UFO crash. ■

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