

the air like Frisbees, except that in *Aurora Encounter*, the flying saucer looks like a gray meat locker and sounds like a Hoover upright vacuum cleaner.... [I]nspired casting that borders on exploitation has Mickey Hays as an alien from outer space. Mickey is the 13-year-old from Hallsville afflicted with progeria, the disease that ages its victims prematurely.... Mickey is tiny, bald, frail; it's tragic that with only a little putty on his ears, he genuinely looks as if he's from another world. He is also a surprisingly good actor, though it's hard to tell if the sympathy we feel is for him or his character, both of which we know are doomed to a premature death (*Dallas Times-Herald*, March 13).

All stories of nineteenth-century UFO crashes must be viewed as suspect. It is probable that few such reports were believed, or even were meant to be believed, in their time. Some are obvious jokes. In other cases, those in which the teller relates the tale with an ostensibly straight face, we would do well to keep in mind that to twentieth-century eyes the original article about the Aurora crash looks to be, its exotic content aside, a sober dispatch. Newspaper hoaxing and frontier humor surely have far more to do with the genesis of these reports than do interplanetary tragedies involving collisions of spaceships with windmills and barns.

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CRASHES OF UFOs, 1947-1959

For all the stir they would cause from 1980 on, following the publication that year of Charles Berlitz and William L. Moore's *The Roswell Incident*, stories of flying-saucer crashes received relatively little attention from early ufologists. The bulk of the attention early crash reports attracted is retrospective, as the bibliography following this entry attests. The emphasis in the paragraphs below is on the crashed-disc issue as it was perceived by early ufologists; thus crashes that were alleged to have occurred in the 1940s or 1950s but were reported only after 1959 are not discussed here. They will be examined in Volume 3 of *The UFO Encyclopedia*.

Roswell. Though the Roswell incident (which actually took place some 75 miles away, on a ranch in the Corona, New Mexico, area) is now generally regarded as one of the most important UFO events in history, an extensive review of the UFO literature of the 1950s finds little mention of it beyond the first press accounts in early July 1947. The only known references to it as a UFO crash are in a paragraph of **Harold T. Wilkins's** *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (1954)

and in a question-and-answer session following a 1956 lecture to **Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York** by broadcaster and UFO enthusiast **Frank Edwards**. Edwards stated, inaccurately, that at Roswell a "farmer reported that he saw something strike a mountainside and crash" (*Public Meeting*, 1956). In 1955 England's *Flying Saucer Review* briefly recounted the experience of entertainer Hughie Green who, while driving across the United States in June 1947, heard an announcement that a flying saucer "had crashed in New Mexico and that the Army were moving in to investigate. Later the program was interrupted again and quite a few details were given." On his arrival at his destination, Philadelphia, he found nothing in the newspapers, and "questions at the radio stations just drew a blank" ("Star Puzzled," 1955). Possibly Green may have been a little confused about the date of this broadcast; if he was off a week or two (in other words, if he really took his trip in the first part of July), he may have heard early news accounts of the Roswell incident, prior to the release of the official explanation that the object in question was a temporarily unrecognized weather balloon. Roswell is not mentioned in *Flying Saucer Review's* account, however—an indication of how obscure the event had become.

In the 1960s the UFO literature mentioned it only rarely. In 1966 it was cited once (Edwards, 1966) or arguably twice, if one counts the Green story as a citation (Trench, 1966), as the crash of a spaceship. Two mentions the following year endorse the Army Air Force's claim that the wreckage was of nothing extraordinary (Bloecher, 1967; Whitney, 1967). In a 1968 book Robert Loftin devoted a paragraph to the incident, asking (his italics), "*Was a flying saucer crash in the United States explained away as the crash of a burning box kite [sic] with a non-inflammable pie pan tied to its tail?*" (Loftin, 1968). In 1969 a magazine article quoted two sentences of Loftin's short account (Binder and Whritenour, 1969).

The reconsideration of the **Roswell/Corona event** began in January 1978, when ufologists Moore and Stanton T. Friedman compared notes from two separate interviews Friedman had conducted. The interviews were with a woman and a man who had been in New Mexico in July 1947 and who knew of the crash of a mysterious craft. The man, a retired Air Force

officer, Maj. Jesse A. Marcel, claimed to have been involved in the retrieval of a great quantity of a strange material believed to be the remains of an extraterrestrial vehicle. The woman, Lydia Sleppy, had worked at Albuquerque radio station KOAT and remembered how the military had squelched coverage of a crashed saucer and the bodies of "little men," even to the extent of stopping the transmission of a teletyped news report.

Moore and Friedman linked these accounts with an obscure episode which occurred a week and a half after the June 24, 1947, **Kenneth Arnold sighting** brought the term "flying saucers" into the popular vocabulary. For a brief period, no more than a few hours, a widely published story reported that personnel from Roswell Field had a "flying disc" in their possession. When the material was flown to Eighth Army Air Force Headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas, the commander, Brig. Gen. Roger M. Ramey, told the press that the "disc" was really just a weather balloon and produced balloon remains to "prove" it. Pictures were taken, there were chuckles all around, and the press fell victim to a lie and a cover-up authorities were able to maintain without challenge for over three decades.

The **Roswell story** is only a footnote in the public history of the UFO phenomenon of the late 1940s and 1950s, the period with which this book is principally concerned, and so readers seeking details of what emerged from the later investigations are referred to Volume 1 of this series, *UFOs in the 1980s*, and to the entry "Crashes of UFOs."

Even today, however, the hidden history of the Roswell wreckage—what was done with it, who studied it, what conclusions were drawn from it—remains a mystery, though a controversial document, purportedly a briefing paper prepared for President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower on November 18, 1952, asserts that on September 24, 1947, President Harry S. Truman ordered the creation of supersecret "Operation Majestic-12" (or, more simply, "MJ-12") to study the remains and to make recommendations. The document appeared one day in December 1984 in an unmarked manila envelope, postmarked Albuquerque, in the mail of Los Angeles television producer and Moore associate Jaime Shandera. In early

UFOs in the 1980s

CONTACTEES (continued)

into the throat of a channeler or by whispering into the ear of an automatic writer but by subjecting their students to near-traumatic ordeals, a Space Age version of traditional rites of passage at the end of which the seeker emerges mature and wise. How appealing this model of the contact experience will be remains to be seen, but it is one of the few new ideas to enter contactee theology since Adamski.

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CRASHES OF UFOs

Spaceships from other worlds have been crash-landing on American soil since 1884, when the *Nebraska Nugget*, a weekly newspaper published in Holdrege, reported on June 6 that cowboys at work in remote Dundy County had seen a blazing object plunge to earth, spraying "fragments of cog-wheels and other pieces of machinery . . . and glowing with heat so intense as to scorch the grass for a long distance around each fragment and make it impossible for one to approach it." The brilliant light cast by the object blinded one of the cowboys, the *Nugget* said. On the 10th a Dundy County correspondent reported in Lincoln's *Daily State Journal* that the vehicle's remains vanished in a rainstorm, "dissolved by the water like a spoonful of salt" (Clark, 1986).