

WHAT'S THAT?

THOUSANDS of people claimed they saw it. Newspapers carried detailed accounts of it. But it was unlikely to have existed.

For they were talking about an airship—in 1896, seven years before the Wright brothers' first flight.

The story of this forerunner of today's UFO's is given by Daniel Cohen in "The Great Airship Mystery" (Dodd, Mead and Company, New York).

The first sighting is said to have been made on the dark, wet evening of November 17, 1896, at Sacramento, in California.

Cohen says that railway worker Charles Lusk, "saw a bright light sailing above the rooftops."

Hundreds of others claimed they had seen the same thing, and one claimed that he had heard it too.

This man, R. L. Lowery, said he saw a cigar-shaped body and, suspended beneath it, "two men seated as though on bicycle frames and working with a bicycle movement."

And he heard one of them say: "Throw her up higher—she'll hit the steeple."

The object then disappeared into the night.

Five days later, a mysterious light again appeared over Sacramento.

Deputy Sheriff Walter Mallory described it as a

IT'S AN ANTIQUE UFO

T. Melville
Thousands spotted odd objects in the sky long before the first aircraft took off

by **DON FARMER**

"strong white light, seemingly moving, I thought, as if attached to a balloon, but on a closer observation I thought I recognised a dark body immediately over the light, somewhat of a different shape than a balloon."

At the same time as this light was being viewed by thousands in Sacramento, a similar light was seen in the San Francisco Bay area.

SIGHTINGS

Cohen writes: "Over the next few days, sightings of the airship, or what people took to be the airship, came

in from all over California, and from as far as Tacoma, Washington, and western Canada.

"The multitude of sightings makes it impossible to believe that there was only one object involved.

"The airship was reported over Tacoma at 11 p.m. on November 24, and a half-hour later was seen at San Jose, California.

"Tacoma and San Jose are approximately 750 miles apart. The following evening the object was spotted about 55 miles east of Los Angeles at the same time as it was being reported in Oakland, some 400 miles to the northwest."

One newspaper published an interview with a

Colonel H. G. Shaw. He said he was driving through the country one evening when he came across "three strange beings" about 7ft. tall who spoke a guttural language he couldn't understand.

"Their ship was about 150 feet in length at least, though probably not over 20ft. in diameter at the widest part.

"It was pointed at both ends, and outside of a large rudder there was no visible machinery."

VANISHED

The colonel claimed that the three beings tried to abduct him. Then they went back to their ship, which took off "silently and rapidly."

The airship disappeared from America's west coast in the middle of December, 1896, but was again being reported all over the Mid-West by the following April.

The airship was said to have been photographed near Chicago and one news-

paper published a drawing based on the photograph. Many people claimed the photo was a fake.

The mysterious object vanished almost as quickly as it had appeared, and no more sightings were reported after April, 1897.

Was it a hoax, fake, or a

planet? Cohen says: "There can be no single, simple explanation for all of the mystery airship sightings."

But after reading hundreds of airship stories he adds: "I am nagged by the feeling that *all* of these people could not have been mistaken or lying."

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