

UFO POTPOURRI

no. 326-7,8-34

HEAVENLY HOST OR UFO?

The story of the "Miracle at the Wabash Campground" was found in the book THE SAINT OF THE WINDERNESS by Jess Carr. This book is a biography of Robert Sayers Sheffey, who, in the 1800s, traveled the circuits of Virginia, West Virginia and into the fringes of other states as an itinerant preacher. He became a legend due to his dedication. The following excerpts may be found on pages 399-403:

"While descending the incline of the road as it ran eastward from the Bland County line into Giles, he could see in the distance toward the village of White Gate a long train of wagons, buggies, and horses returning from the Wabash camp grounds. As the people drew nearer he saw a look of ecstasy and peace about them. Some of them hummed low and a few wept softly. He slowed Gideon as soon as he was sure that some trick of vision and rationalization was not being played upon his senses.

"The train of travelers came abreast of him and began stopping one by one. Men, women, and children climbed down from the wagons and buggies and joined the foot traffic already rushing toward him.

"'Oh, Brother Sheffy,' an elderly woman literally cried out to him, 'you should have been there--the angels sang!'"

"He explained his confinement and absence from the camp meeting, which he knew had been explained to them at the camp ground, but his words seemed to sail past the ears of all his onlookers.

"'The angels sang!' A dozen voices echoed the original statement. The ranks of faces, still enraptured, swelled about him. Some clung to each other, others chanted a barely audible ode of joy.

"'Brother Sheffey, it happened when we were singing the closing hymn of the service last night,' a faithful campgoer not noted for conversational enthusiasm reported.

"'The sweet Lord manifests Himself in many ways, Brother Suiter, and I am anxious to hear that which you have all seen and heard.'

"Suiter stepped forward a step or two, and at closer range the look of haunted sublimity was even more pronounced upon his face. 'Brother Sheffey, I don't know whether you will believe me since you weren't here,' he began. 'It has been a glorious camp session, and the constables told us that over five thousand people were in attendance. It was the most spirit-filled meeting I've ever been to, and you know how long I've been going and taking my family.'

"Robert nodded and asked the other to proceed.

"'On Monday--last night--the last night of the meetings, Dr. J.W. Perry from Abingdon was preaching from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews:.. Before he finished reading I had a feeling I've never felt since, I was born into this world. I can't explain it to you very good, but my wife and others around us felt it too.'

"Mrs. Suiter nodded agreement and several heads around her, both male and female, also nodded affirmatively.

"Suiter continued: 'We were sitting on one of the slab pews under the worship shed, near the north overhang of the roof. When the call to repentance and conversion came, numbers all around us started going forward, and those remaining started to sing 'Jesus, Lover of My Soul.'

Credit: M. Beach (Genealogist)

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Before we had finished the first verse of the song a strange feeling came over me and I heard a high-pitched drone above my head--like a swarm of bees going by. I looked around me and others just outside the shed in the open air were gazing toward the sky and pointing upward

with their fingers. The people under the shed kept singing, and when the second verse of the song was started, Reverend Ed Bailey, the leader, stopped singing and looked up toward the roof. Reverend Wagner, who had also preached that night and was still on the platform, called out in a loud voice above the singing, 'Listen! Listen! The redeemed hosts of heaven are singing! I hear the voice of my mother!' We all stopped singing, and one of your wife's people, a Mrs. Stafford, recognized her mother's voice.

"By then people were rushing out from under the shed, but some stayed and knelt in prayer. We could hear better out from under the shed, and there was a sweetness in the voices I couldn't explain if my life depended on it--they were much clearer and higher than human voices. The heavenly chorus didn't sound like it was right in front of us, but it didn't sound far away either. It lasted only a little while; then the angels' voices stopped just as quick as they started. All the faces turned up toward the moonlight looked like mirrors reflecting moonbeams, but we waited in vain: no voices were heard a second time. Everybody in the camp stayed up all of last night--we haven't had any sleep since Sunday.'

"Suiter stopped, seemingly exhausted. Robert searched his face and saw in it the countenance of a man who had relieved himself of a great burden.

"Brother Sheffey, you must believe me, all that I have told you is the truth!"

"Robert asked for no confirmation but every head was nodding agreement.

"Not for a moment do I doubt our sweet Lord's presence in a very special way," Robert said.

"It was a miracle," Suiter breathed reverently.

"I never heard the angels sing before, and many people felt things they'd never felt before. I did."

"There is so much for our hearts and minds to see if we prepare ourselves. Only our sweet Lord knows if it was a miracle that you saw, but I believe otherwise. I believe from what you have told me that this blessed camp session has been so spirit-filled that many of you have been able to humble yourselves to a level of spiritual obedience that has allowed you to see the substance of life with more depth than most men ever see. Neither can we forget the earlier happenings of the session: many were converted, no doubt, and this alone is cause for great joy. Do you not remember that our Lord has said that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance? It is not beyond reason nor divine dispensation that we have been shown only the heights of a very great happiness."

"But it never happened before." A timid voice, more troubled than comforted, spoke out from the circle.

"Have you ever felt yourselves more humbled and yielding before?" Robert countererred.

"Suiter agreed they hadn't--and, furthermore, that this knowledge had been the main subject of the all-night discussion after the soul-shaking experience. Recounted also was a concern that if they had indeed witnessed a miracle, why had not all onlookers been aware of it.

"....'Dear brothers and sisters, what I am saying is that you have seen for only a brief while what is all around us--what was already there. Bless you for your soul's vision, and may it always strengthen you, as I can assure you that it will. Do not allow yourselves to think of this experience as the supernatural....'"

"In a little more than an hour after eating he and Gideon stood on the soil of the Wabash camp grounds. Nearly all of the participating preachers had remained. He found them to be shaken and humbled men, and Tyler Frazier confirmed all that Robert had already heard.