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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:10,520

It is one of the most bizarre UFO stories ever told.

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00:00:10,520 --> 00:00:14,680

Aurora, Texas, April 17, 1897.

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00:00:14,680 --> 00:00:20,000

Witnesses report a flying airship five years before the Wright Brothers take flight.

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00:00:20,000 --> 00:00:25,160

Whatever was flying over Texas in 1897 was not man-made.

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00:00:25,160 --> 00:00:31,160

This shows that a UFO crashed at this site in 1897.

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00:00:31,160 --> 00:00:35,280

In the wreckage, a small, badly disfigured body is discovered.

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00:00:35,280 --> 00:00:41,160

Described in newspapers as not an inhabitant of this world, he is buried in a local cemetery

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00:00:41,160 --> 00:00:43,320

and a legend is born.

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00:00:43,320 --> 00:00:45,680

Some call it town folklore.

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00:00:45,680 --> 00:00:49,080

Others call it the biggest event in human history.

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00:00:49,080 --> 00:00:51,240

There's a better example of a UFO.

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00:00:51,240 --> 00:00:52,880

I don't know what it is.

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00:00:52,880 --> 00:00:54,600

Fact or fiction?

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00:00:54,600 --> 00:00:56,600

Truth or myth?

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00:00:56,600 --> 00:01:07,840

Join us as we open the UFO files on Texas' Roswell.

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00:01:07,840 --> 00:01:14,880

The 1947 Roswell incident may be the most famous UFO crash story of all time.

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00:01:14,880 --> 00:01:18,440

But was it the first?

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00:01:18,440 --> 00:01:24,520

On April 17, 1897, a mysterious airship was seen in the skies over the small Fort Worth

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00:01:24,520 --> 00:01:30,720

suburb of Aurora, Texas, on a collision course with the home of a local judge.

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00:01:30,720 --> 00:01:34,760

The story of the Aurora crash is fairly simple and straightforward.

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00:01:34,760 --> 00:01:41,400

According to the newspaper accounts at the time, early in the morning of April 17, 1897,

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00:01:41,400 --> 00:01:47,800

a large silver cigar-shaped object came fluttering closer and closer to the earth, struck a tower

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00:01:47,800 --> 00:01:54,640

at Judge Proctor's house, exploded scattering debris all over the place.

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00:01:54,640 --> 00:02:00,040

Two days later, April 19, 1897, the Dallas Morning News reported,

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00:02:00,040 --> 00:02:04,840

About six o'clock this morning, the early risers of Aurora were astonished at the sudden

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00:02:04,840 --> 00:02:08,560

appearance of the airship which has been sailing through the country.

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00:02:08,560 --> 00:02:13,440

It was traveling due north and much nearer the earth than ever before.

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00:02:13,440 --> 00:02:18,040

It sailed directly over the public square and when it reached the north part of town,

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00:02:18,040 --> 00:02:22,600

collided with the tower of Judge Proctor's windmill and went into pieces with a terrific

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00:02:22,600 --> 00:02:28,600

explosion.

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00:02:28,600 --> 00:02:34,200

Scattering debris over several acres of ground, wrecking the windmill and water tank and destroying

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00:02:34,200 --> 00:02:37,800

the judge's flower garden.

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00:02:37,800 --> 00:02:42,240

According to the local legend, many of Aurora's residents raced to Judge J.S. Proctor's

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00:02:42,240 --> 00:02:45,200

farm to help in any way they could.

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00:02:45,200 --> 00:02:49,200

What they found was beyond comprehension.

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00:02:49,200 --> 00:02:55,640

The Dallas Morning News reported that someone or something was in the craft.

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00:02:55,640 --> 00:03:00,240

The pilot of the ship is supposed to have been the only one on board and while his remains

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00:03:00,240 --> 00:03:05,160

were badly disfigured, enough of the original has been picked up to show that he was not

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00:03:05,160 --> 00:03:09,000

an inhabitant of this war.

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00:03:09,000 --> 00:03:14,440

Mr. T.J. Weems, the United States Army Signal Services Officer at this place and an authority

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00:03:14,440 --> 00:03:21,160

on astronomy, gives it as his opinion that the pilot was a native of the planet Mars.

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00:03:21,160 --> 00:03:27,160

His description was that it was an alien in form and he was referred to as a Martian.

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00:03:27,160 --> 00:03:33,920

Now the only reference to Martians at that time were in the drawings of the science fiction

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00:03:33,920 --> 00:03:39,200

writers so it could have been sparked in part by literature.

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00:03:39,200 --> 00:03:44,840

Of course I wasn't there so I can't say for sure who piloted the craft.

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00:03:44,840 --> 00:03:50,760

All I can go is by the newspaper accounts and they made it quite clear that the remains

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00:03:50,760 --> 00:03:55,240

clearly indicated he was not an inhabitant of this world.

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00:03:55,240 --> 00:04:02,280

According to the Fort Worth Register, the alien did not survive.

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00:04:02,280 --> 00:04:06,920

They reported that he was given a Christian burial in the town cemetery.

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00:04:06,920 --> 00:04:12,760

The fragments of the craft were then thrown down a well.

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00:04:12,760 --> 00:04:19,480

The townspeople more or less wanted to forget about it and I won't say pretend it didn't

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00:04:19,480 --> 00:04:27,000

happen but probably couldn't cope with what happened and didn't know.

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00:04:27,000 --> 00:04:32,000

A small stone was placed over the unmarked plot to confirm the grave of the airship pilot

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00:04:32,200 --> 00:04:37,240

but as time passed he would not be allowed to rest in peace.

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00:04:37,240 --> 00:04:43,640

Years have gone by leaving fewer and fewer eyewitnesses to the events of April 1897.

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00:04:43,640 --> 00:04:49,640

Eventually the story became a legend, a colorful tale that some considered to be fiction.

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00:04:49,640 --> 00:04:51,640

Judge Procter's Land was sold.

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00:04:51,640 --> 00:04:56,120

The newspaper stopped writing about the incident and Aurora and the grave site became little

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00:04:56,120 --> 00:04:59,040

more than a curiosity.

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00:04:59,040 --> 00:05:05,200

My initial reaction to the Aurora story I have to admit was a little bit of one of skepticism

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00:05:05,200 --> 00:05:09,920

but if you're going to be a history writer you need to at least make a stab at trying

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00:05:09,920 --> 00:05:14,600

to find out the truth and that's what launched my investigation.

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00:05:14,600 --> 00:05:19,440

When I began to research it however I found that there was more to the story than just

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00:05:19,440 --> 00:05:20,960

the Aurora incident.

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00:05:20,960 --> 00:05:25,320

I went to the Dallas Morning News assuming that the Aurora story would be a headline

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00:05:25,320 --> 00:05:26,320

on page one.

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00:05:26,600 --> 00:05:32,520

Well it wasn't, it was buried in the middle of page five.

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00:05:32,520 --> 00:05:37,840

And what intrigued me was it wasn't even the first airship story on that page.

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00:05:37,840 --> 00:05:42,760

In fact there were over a dozen different articles about the mysterious airships listed

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00:05:42,760 --> 00:05:46,200

in the April 19th edition of the paper.

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00:05:46,200 --> 00:05:52,160

There were at least 16 in that same area the two days before this incident.

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00:05:52,160 --> 00:05:59,200

16 reported cases by reputable people is significant.

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00:05:59,200 --> 00:06:06,040

In late November 1896 thousands of witnesses reported seeing the mysterious airship 1500

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00:06:06,040 --> 00:06:09,880

miles away over California.

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00:06:09,880 --> 00:06:14,280

Over the next few months the tale spread to more than 20 additional states from California

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00:06:14,280 --> 00:06:15,760

to Michigan.

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00:06:15,760 --> 00:06:21,640

In Texas alone the airship was spotted in over 30 counties between April and May of 1897.

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00:06:22,640 --> 00:06:30,640

For those two months in 1897 literally hundreds of Texans saw something in the night air over

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00:06:30,640 --> 00:06:31,640

Texas.

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00:06:31,640 --> 00:06:33,900

They described it as cigar shaped.

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00:06:33,900 --> 00:06:37,400

Some people said it had lights, some people said it didn't.

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00:06:37,400 --> 00:06:41,360

Some said it could go 200, 150, 300 miles an hour.

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00:06:41,360 --> 00:06:45,400

It could do things that airships today can barely do.

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00:06:46,400 --> 00:06:54,160

Top speed at that time was about 35 to 40 miles an hour by train.

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00:06:54,160 --> 00:06:58,680

And for reputable people to say something flew over their head going more than 100

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00:06:58,680 --> 00:07:02,920

miles an hour would be the same as us saying something went over our head going thousands

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00:07:02,920 --> 00:07:06,320

of miles an hour.

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00:07:06,320 --> 00:07:10,960

Texas historian Wallace Charitan focused his research on the incident on the so-called

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00:07:10,960 --> 00:07:14,920

witnesses listed in the newspaper articles.

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00:07:14,920 --> 00:07:18,800

What I was trying to do was prove were these real people.

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00:07:18,800 --> 00:07:20,760

I was very pleased to find yes they were.

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00:07:20,760 --> 00:07:23,800

They were in fact real people.

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00:07:23,800 --> 00:07:27,280

When I first heard the stories of the airships that excited me.

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00:07:27,280 --> 00:07:29,520

It wasn't a lone incident.

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00:07:29,520 --> 00:07:32,520

People across the country were experiencing something.

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00:07:32,520 --> 00:07:34,840

That gave it validity.

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00:07:34,840 --> 00:07:36,560

What were they seeing?

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00:07:36,560 --> 00:07:38,040

Why were they seeing it?

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00:07:38,040 --> 00:07:42,320

I'm not sure that we'll ever know what they were seeing.

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00:07:42,320 --> 00:07:44,280

What I am sure is they saw something.

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00:07:44,280 --> 00:07:46,120

Could it have been a balloon?

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00:07:46,120 --> 00:07:47,120

Perhaps.

103

00:07:47,120 --> 00:07:50,720

Probably not an airplane since it didn't exist.

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00:07:50,720 --> 00:07:56,400

The first recorded man-made heavy-of-an-air flight was made of course by the Wright brothers

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00:07:56,400 --> 00:08:00,920

in December of 1903 at Kitty Hawk.

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00:08:00,920 --> 00:08:08,480

So whatever was flying over Texas in 1897 was not man-made.

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00:08:08,480 --> 00:08:13,800

In fact, while hot air balloons were commonly used in the late 1800s, they were not able

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00:08:13,800 --> 00:08:19,400

to perform complicated maneuvers such as right-angled turns and rapid altitude changes that had

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00:08:19,400 --> 00:08:22,960

been described by witnesses.

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00:08:22,960 --> 00:08:27,640

Patents had been registered for more advanced airships, but there is no record of any actually

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00:08:27,640 --> 00:08:30,520

flying during that period.

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00:08:31,520 --> 00:08:38,640

We're talking about something that did not exist in 1897 and yet was seen by literally

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00:08:38,640 --> 00:08:39,640

thousands of people.

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00:08:39,640 --> 00:08:47,080

If there's a better example of a UFO, I don't know what it is.

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00:08:47,080 --> 00:08:51,120

Soon after the Aurora crash was reported, the sightings ended.

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00:08:51,120 --> 00:08:53,520

Suddenly there were questions.

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00:08:53,520 --> 00:08:58,520

Were these sightings real or were they all part of a gigantic hoax?

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00:08:58,520 --> 00:09:04,120

If you subtract out the known hoaxes, if you forget about them, what you're left with

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00:09:04,120 --> 00:09:11,800

are hundreds of sightings by just common everyday people that had absolutely no motive other

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00:09:11,800 --> 00:09:16,000

than the fact I saw something and I want to report it.

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00:09:16,000 --> 00:09:21,760

Over the years we investigate hundreds, thousands of UFO reports.

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00:09:21,760 --> 00:09:26,440

They're seen, they land, and they fly away.

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00:09:26,440 --> 00:09:31,600

This was something where it was seen, crashed, and left behind an occupant.

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00:09:31,600 --> 00:09:36,280

That's why to me Aurora was the best airship case to investigate.

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00:09:36,280 --> 00:09:42,320

And then, ah, it's before Roswell, no one's gone in to cover it up.

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00:09:42,320 --> 00:09:44,080

They didn't know about it.

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00:09:44,080 --> 00:09:51,200

So that to me was the ultimate case to get the evidence I needed to prove or disprove

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00:09:51,200 --> 00:09:53,200

what was going on.

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00:09:54,200 --> 00:09:57,200

Aurora, Texas, 1897.

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00:09:57,200 --> 00:10:00,200

50 years before Roswell.

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00:10:00,200 --> 00:10:06,200

Newspapers reported a major crash and a dead spaceman buried in the Aurora cemetery.

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00:10:06,200 --> 00:10:09,200

But as time went by, the story was lost.

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00:10:09,200 --> 00:10:13,200

Then, 70 years later, it resurfaced.

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00:10:13,200 --> 00:10:21,200

Well in 1973, Bill Case started writing articles for the Dallas Morning News, and that spread

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00:10:21,200 --> 00:10:23,200

over the countryside.

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00:10:23,200 --> 00:10:30,200

The interest jumped because again somebody was resurrecting the old Aurora crash in 1897.

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00:10:32,200 --> 00:10:34,200

The legend was reborn.

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00:10:34,200 --> 00:10:40,200

Ufologists across the country scrambled to uncover the truth behind the possible alien graveyard.

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00:10:40,200 --> 00:10:47,200

Hayden Hughes, the founder of the International UFO Bureau, was among the first to arrive in Aurora.

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00:10:48,200 --> 00:10:56,200

Aurora was the outstanding case to me because of the crash of one of the airships for study,

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00:10:56,200 --> 00:11:02,200

and for the remains of a pilot to be studied or exhumed if he was buried.

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00:11:03,200 --> 00:11:05,200

Aurora was different.

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00:11:05,200 --> 00:11:10,200

There was a body, a supposed alien body.

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00:11:11,200 --> 00:11:18,200

There's very few retrievable corpses or bodies associated with UFOs,

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00:11:18,200 --> 00:11:23,200

but none that could be documented as well as the Aurora case.

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00:11:25,200 --> 00:11:30,200

My belief in what the occupant pilot was, what it was said,

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00:11:30,200 --> 00:11:36,200

that it was the pilot of what the craft was, his description was that it was an alien informant.

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00:11:37,200 --> 00:11:46,200

It was small in stature, which would confirm the type of creatures that are seen most frequently aboard UFOs.

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00:11:46,200 --> 00:11:50,200

They are small in stature, childlike in size.

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00:11:51,200 --> 00:11:55,200

The body, the crash site, the remnants of the airship.

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00:11:55,200 --> 00:12:01,200

To Hughes, these had to be either the real thing or a hoax, and it was worth investigating.

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00:12:02,200 --> 00:12:07,200

As to what to expect when we came to Aurora that first time,

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00:12:07,200 --> 00:12:12,200

I was quite surprised that it wasn't as big as I visualized it to be.

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00:12:12,200 --> 00:12:17,200

Coming into town, where was it? Well, we just went through it.

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00:12:19,200 --> 00:12:25,200

There's the cemetery, okay? There's the hill. The windmill's over this way.

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00:12:26,200 --> 00:12:31,200

There's some houses down this way or businesses. That was the extent of it.

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00:12:32,200 --> 00:12:36,200

Another surprise. Hughes's reception by the residents of Aurora.

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00:12:36,200 --> 00:12:40,200

It appeared that they had no interest in solving the mystery.

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00:12:42,200 --> 00:12:46,200

One time you talked, the people were open. The next time, they were not.

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00:12:47,200 --> 00:12:50,200

We were allowed in the cemetery on some occasions.

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00:12:50,200 --> 00:12:54,200

On some occasions, we were barred and could not go in the cemetery.

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00:12:55,200 --> 00:13:04,200

So the emotional level of the town kind of told me they wanted no involvement with it.

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00:13:05,200 --> 00:13:12,200

I had gone from extreme excitement and the possibility of what we could get to a frustration

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00:13:12,200 --> 00:13:16,200

and that it was like the town was against us from the beginning.

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00:13:17,200 --> 00:13:21,200

Then Hughes and other UFO researchers in Aurora had a breakthrough.

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00:13:21,200 --> 00:13:25,200

The discovery of first-hand accounts of the crash.

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00:13:25,200 --> 00:13:31,200

The witnesses were less than perfect. Some memories had faded. Others were incomplete.

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00:13:31,200 --> 00:13:34,200

And eyewitnesses were now in their 80s.

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00:13:35,200 --> 00:13:39,200

Ufologist Jim Mars was among the first to interview the residents.

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00:13:40,200 --> 00:13:44,200

In 1973, I interviewed three people who were alive at the time.

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00:13:44,200 --> 00:13:52,200

One, Robbie Hansen, said it was a hoax. But then, by her own story, she was not a direct witness,

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00:13:52,200 --> 00:13:58,200

had no direct knowledge of it. Her father was told about it, he laughed, thought it was a hoax,

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00:13:58,200 --> 00:14:00,200

and that stuck in her mind.

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00:14:01,200 --> 00:14:09,200

But then, Mars discovered two witnesses who contradicted Hansen and offered first-hand accounts of the actual crash.

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00:14:10,200 --> 00:14:14,200

There's Mary Evans, who did recall that something crashed.

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00:14:14,200 --> 00:14:18,200

Her parents went to look at the wreckage but would not let her go.

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00:14:18,200 --> 00:14:21,200

So we have kind of an indirect witness there who says it did happen.

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00:14:23,200 --> 00:14:28,200

And then we've got Charlie Stevens, who is a 10-year-old boy, was out doing the chores

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00:14:28,200 --> 00:14:35,200

and actually told me he saw the thing go over. He said it was trailing smoke and it seemed to be in trouble.

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00:14:35,200 --> 00:14:40,200

He saw it disappear towards Aurora, heard the explosion, saw smoke going up.

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00:14:40,200 --> 00:14:46,200

He wanted to go up and see what had happened, but his father, this old farmer in 1897, said,

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00:14:46,200 --> 00:14:48,200

no son, we have to finish the chores.

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00:14:49,200 --> 00:14:56,200

And he said his father went up into town the next day and came back and told him about all the wreckage that was lying around.

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00:14:58,200 --> 00:15:03,200

So the preponderance of the eyewitness testimony leans towards something happened.

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00:15:06,200 --> 00:15:13,200

In addition to eyewitness accounts, researchers located one man who added a new twist to the investigation.

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00:15:13,200 --> 00:15:18,200

Aurora resident Broly Oates, who suffered from an extreme case of rheumatoid arthritis,

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00:15:18,200 --> 00:15:23,200

believed his debilitating health condition was somehow connected to the Aurora legend.

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00:15:24,200 --> 00:15:29,200

Broly Oates lived at the site of the crash. I believe he moved there in 1945.

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00:15:29,200 --> 00:15:35,200

And when he moved there, he had the well cleaned out because it had all this metal stuff and debris down in it.

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00:15:35,200 --> 00:15:37,200

And he needed to use it for water.

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00:15:38,200 --> 00:15:46,200

Oates believes that the water in that well that he and his family drank for about 12 years affected their health drastically.

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00:15:46,200 --> 00:15:53,200

In fact, he developed some of the worst arthritis conditions in his hands and other things that anybody has seen.

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00:15:54,200 --> 00:16:00,200

I don't see how a person could survive or could walk or could function in any way.

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00:16:00,200 --> 00:16:06,200

And basically it was, they would either swell up so big that they would burst.

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00:16:06,200 --> 00:16:11,200

And at times probably bigger than golf balls on your fingers.

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00:16:11,200 --> 00:16:19,200

And he claimed that it was from maybe the water from the well that they used. That's the way he towed it.

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00:16:20,200 --> 00:16:29,200

Broly Oates told me that it was because of radiation from the well where people had thrown pieces of this Aurora spaceship.

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00:16:32,200 --> 00:16:38,200

But in sealing off the well on his property, Oates also sealed crucial evidence to the mystery inside.

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00:16:39,200 --> 00:16:45,200

For researchers, the scientific evidence to support their case was becoming increasingly difficult to find.

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00:16:46,200 --> 00:16:58,200

We can't go on legends. We need scientific proof that you can take any court of law and prove that this event actually took place as our investigation disclosed.

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00:16:59,200 --> 00:17:04,200

In 1973, investigators set out to the crash site and the graveyard.

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00:17:04,200 --> 00:17:09,200

They hoped to find any evidence that could have survived the 75 years since the crash.

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00:17:16,200 --> 00:17:26,200

In the 1973 investigation, researchers found witnesses that authenticated an airship crash in April 1897.

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00:17:28,200 --> 00:17:31,200

There were also claims of an alien buried in the local cemetery.

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00:17:31,200 --> 00:17:38,200

But even with personal testimonies, ufologists realized that they needed scientific evidence.

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00:17:38,200 --> 00:17:43,200

They hoped to find debris from the crash on the property formerly owned by Judge J.S. Proctor.

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00:17:44,200 --> 00:17:49,200

What happened to the metal is probably anyone's guess at this point.

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00:17:49,200 --> 00:17:56,200

The best guess to me was the main bulk of it was hauled off and what was left behind was thrown down the well.

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00:17:57,200 --> 00:18:02,200

Finding the well was easy, but researchers quickly discovered a problem.

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00:18:02,200 --> 00:18:07,200

The well had been sealed off years earlier by the new property owner, Broly Oates.

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00:18:08,200 --> 00:18:19,200

He had this big slab of 8 by 8 feet concrete over the old well, so to move that would be a major job.

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00:18:21,200 --> 00:18:26,200

Discouraged, investigators turned their search for clues to other parts of the property.

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00:18:28,200 --> 00:18:33,200

They went around and they got the little pinging of the machine and they dig down and they found pieces of stuff.

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00:18:33,200 --> 00:18:40,200

And some of the things they found were natural things you would find on a piece of property that had been around for years and had been farmed.

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00:18:42,200 --> 00:18:47,200

Nails, bolts and many other identifiable items were dug up at the crash site.

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00:18:47,200 --> 00:18:50,200

But then, something caught their attention.

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00:18:51,200 --> 00:19:00,200

One of the fellows from Corpus Christi, Texas, found a piece that was very significant that Mufon actually had analyzed by John Schusler.

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00:19:04,200 --> 00:19:13,200

This was tested two times. In 1973, immediately after it was taken out of the ground, it was transmitted to me and I took it into an aerospace laboratory.

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00:19:13,200 --> 00:19:19,200

This laboratory was one that was used to determine the failure modes of aircraft and spacecraft parts.

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00:19:19,200 --> 00:19:21,200

So they had the latest and best equipment.

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00:19:21,200 --> 00:19:26,200

They are the ones that did the first analysis and determined the unusual nature of it.

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00:19:27,200 --> 00:19:32,200

The analysis showed that it had been there for a long, long time.

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00:19:32,200 --> 00:19:38,200

And then when you cut into the metal, they were 95% pure aluminum and 5% iron.

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5% iron in solution and aluminum is a no-no. It doesn't mix that way. It's like less than a percent normally.

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And when there is iron, there is usually zinc or other materials. There was none of that in this case.

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00:19:53,200 --> 00:20:05,200

Although the major aerospace laboratory that initially tested the sample has asked to remain anonymous for this program, Schusler verified the results with the Nastas laboratories in Houston, Texas.

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According to Schusler, both laboratories reached the same conclusion.

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Intrigued, he had the laboratories continue their tests on the sample to further determine the optics origin.

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The stories were that this thing exploded. It blew molten material out of this vast explosion mess.

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And that material hit things and dried and cooled.

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Well, the structural analysis of the material showed that it was air-cooled on the ground after it had been molten in the air.

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So the structure was perfect to fit the story.

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As Schusler uncovered the smoking gun to the Aurora crash.

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The material found and analyzed in 1973 couldn't have been made at that time on that farm or in the town of Aurora or anywhere around there.

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But it had to be made in a very sophisticated laboratory using ultrapure refining techniques.

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It's just a marvelous thing to have a piece of something you believe really could have come from a spaceship.

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Newspapers were quick to jump on the story of the new investigations into the airship crash.

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And as a result, the accuracy of the reporting suffered.

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Such was the case with a different sample sent to Dr. Tom Gray, now a professor emeritus at Kansas State University.

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One day there was a knock at my door and a gentleman came in.

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And he had in his possession pieces that he had found at the reported site of the spaceship crash in 1897.

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00:21:48,200 --> 00:21:54,200

Dr. Gray's colleague asked him to analyze the samples to determine if this was a piece of the Aurora spaceship.

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What you are looking at is the actual artifact that was tested.

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00:22:02,200 --> 00:22:08,200

I showed this piece to my father-in-law a few days after I had done the analysis.

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00:22:08,200 --> 00:22:12,200

And his first comment to me was, where did you get that water pump impeller?

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00:22:13,200 --> 00:22:18,200

And so I kind of knew that that didn't come from a spaceship for sure.

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00:22:18,200 --> 00:22:25,200

Once he determined the first samples mundane origin, Dr. Gray began testing the two remaining metal strips.

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Once he discovered the pieces were primarily iron, he made an unusual finding.

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When I checked their magnetic properties, I did it by basically putting them in the presence of a magnet.

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00:22:39,200 --> 00:22:44,200

And they didn't interact with that magnet. And I thought, that's kind of interesting.

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Perplexed, Dr. Gray searched for a certified metallurgist to give a second opinion on his puzzling find.

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It turns out that iron-zinc alloys can be non-magnetic or magnetic depending on how they're cooled.

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Then Dr. Gray relayed his story along with his conclusions to his school newspaper.

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00:23:06,200 --> 00:23:11,200

When the article came out the next day in the campus newspaper, the headline basically said,

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00:23:11,200 --> 00:23:17,200

physicist finds non-magnetic iron at the site of Aurora spaceship crash.

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00:23:18,200 --> 00:23:26,200

There wasn't one word in that article at all about the fact that I needed to talk to the metallurgist to find out what these properties were.

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And of course then the cat was out of the bag, so to speak.

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As a result, Dr. Gray, his findings and the piece of the Aurora spaceship became a part of the legend.

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But this part of the saga was misrepresented.

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Newspapers sometimes are in the business of reporting what they see as the news.

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That's not necessarily really what the news is.

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The real truth of the matter is, those materials were the kind of things you would have expected to find in a farm yard in Aurora, Texas.

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Having gleaned all the evidence they could from the crash site, investigators now shifted their focus toward the Aurora Cemetery.

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People said there was a body that was blown out of the craft and it was badly mangled.

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00:24:18,200 --> 00:24:23,200

And the story was they gave it a Christian burial in the local cemetery.

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We were trying to determine what was the oldest part of the cemetery.

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00:24:30,200 --> 00:24:33,200

That was our logical place to start looking first.

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00:24:33,200 --> 00:24:39,200

They wanted around looking and one of the local people said, those people aren't looking in the right place.

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00:24:39,200 --> 00:24:44,200

You've got to look for this 100-year-old, gnarled oak tree. It's got a big beehive in it.

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00:24:44,200 --> 00:24:52,200

So our investigators went there and they found this small stone that looked like it had an etching of some kind of an airship.

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Believing that they had finally found the spaceman's grave, investigators for the Mutual UFO Network, or MUFON, made another startling discovery.

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And when they went to the grave site where this piece of stone was, they got the same decibel reading on their metal detector that they did from where they picked the material up from the ground.

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Walter Andres, former international director of MUFON, believes there is a connection between the samples located at the crash site and what was reading inside the grave.

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The fact that they detected metal down in this grave indicated that someone must have buried, along with the body, some of the metal fragments from the crash site, which gives it more importance because it ties the two together.

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To find out if there was something there, we sent a certified letter to each of the members of the Cemetery Association in Aurora and asked permission to exhume the body.

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But it was fairly impossible to do that because the Cemetery Association did set against it and they were getting an injunction to stop it.

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And in fact, the day that everybody wanted to descend on the cemetery, they asked the sheriff of Wise County to put some deputies out there and he did.

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00:26:14,200 --> 00:26:29,200

We don't want people coming in the cemetery and digging all over because we're very proud of what we have here and we don't want to see a lot of excavation going on looking for a body.

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00:26:30,200 --> 00:26:43,200

Well, it's frustrating because if we could find that, this would be one of the bigger events and really would top off this whole investigation by coming up with an alien body.

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After two weeks, the patrols ended and MUFON investigators suffered a crushing blow to their research effort.

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When we were able to get back to the grave site, the marker was gone. We don't know who took it or how.

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Then another blow.

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00:27:08,200 --> 00:27:19,200

Someone had driven a three inch pipe down into the earth there and apparently pulled the metal up in this three inch pipe.

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One of our MUFON investigators checked it and did not find any trace of metal with his metal detector.

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What could have been evidence to authenticate the Aurora UFO mystery was gone.

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Was this really Texas' Roswell? That's what investigators in 1973 hoped to find out.

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But like the Roswell story in 1947, the Aurora Texas legend grew larger and the story more twisted as each day passed.

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At every turn, skeptics challenged journalists and investigative agencies like the Mutual UFO Network and the International UFO Bureau seeking to disprove their research.

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The theories ranged from balloons soaring through the sky to the belief the Aurora legend was merely concocted to save a dying town.

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The most prevalent theory to explain the 1897 airship mystery is that it was a balloon.

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Well, unfortunately there is physically no way it could have been a balloon.

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There are no balloons that can rise or fall with lightning speed. They cannot turn at right angles.

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00:28:35,200 --> 00:28:41,200

They cannot go vertically up and vertically down. They simply can't do it.

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00:28:44,200 --> 00:28:53,200

I don't think the balloon theory is feasible in this because of the detailed descriptions of the different airships that were available at the time.

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The government, even in the 40s, tried to claim that different pilots were chasing balloons.

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00:29:01,200 --> 00:29:07,200

Even the famous Roswell crash was a high altitude balloon that had actually crashed.

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So the balloon theory has been there a long time.

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With these facts, many dismissed the balloon theory.

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Other skeptics, however, theorize that the Aurora legend is simply a made up story,

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invented by the author of the original Dallas Morning News article from April 19th, 1897.

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In my opinion, the Aurora story was one that was concocted by S.E. Hayden.

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I did find some people that seemed to recall that their ancestors had said that Hayden was a great practical joker.

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And what a wonderful practical joke this was in 1897, except that it wasn't recognized at that.

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00:29:48,200 --> 00:29:56,200

I've heard the allegation that the author of this article, Mr. Hayden, was a prankster and a hoaxter.

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00:29:57,200 --> 00:30:04,200

I've seen no hard evidence of that. And I've seen no other articles that he wrote that turned out to be wrong.

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00:30:04,200 --> 00:30:11,200

Although Chariton is challenged by some experts, he offers a convincing argument to back up his claim.

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00:30:11,200 --> 00:30:20,200

If Hayden was acting as a reporter as opposed to a hoaxter, it seems very strange to me that he didn't follow the story up to say,

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00:30:20,200 --> 00:30:25,200

well, people showed up for the burial of the alien and we put a little grave marker over it.

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00:30:25,200 --> 00:30:32,200

Somebody said a prayer. It was a wonderful ceremony. That to me would have been expected, but yet

it didn't happen.

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00:30:32,200 --> 00:30:42,200

The mayor of Aurora, Texas, Barbara Brammer, has spent many years researching the town's history and believes her input may solve the Aurora legend.

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The legend from what I have been able to read started after several disasters that we had in the city.

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The first of those disasters was a brutal bollweevil infestation which destroyed Aurora's primary cash crop, Cotton.

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Shortly thereafter, there was a fire on the west side of the town that destroyed several buildings and several people lost their lives.

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And the deaths did not stop there. Shortly after the fire, a massive outbreak of spotted fever nearly wiped out the remaining population of Aurora.

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It was in 1896. Everybody tried to leave it could. The whole city at one time was under quarantine and the only time they left their houses was whenever they went to the cemetery to bury someone.

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In the early 1890s, Aurora saw a glimmer of hope. The railroad was set to lay track in the town and provide much needed economic relief for the town's folk.

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They got as far as laying a spur in this direction for the railroad.

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And then another railroad was going to be coming from out west and it got within 27 miles of this before it was stopped.

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00:32:10,200 --> 00:32:14,200

And it became known then as the railroad that never was.

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The town was crippled economically and the resident spirits were crushed.

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It is this string of events that some believe might provide the motive for the Aurora legend.

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Aurora definitely needed the railroad to save everything that it had going for it at that time.

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When it didn't come through, it started downhill. People started moving away.

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00:32:42,200 --> 00:32:54,200

I believe the people who were left in this town needed something to look forward to and this could be the reason that someone made up the story.

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Although Mayor Brammer's theory goes a long way to explaining the legend, skeptics continued their assault on believers.

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The debunkers said Judge Proctor did not have a windmill.

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Okay, so therefore the whole story is bogus.

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According to Charlie Stevens, no, he did not technically have a windmill, but he had a wooden derrick windlass, which is a wooden tower used to haul up the sump on his well.

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So that's a matter of semantics. There was a wooden tower there that they could have crashed into.

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In order to find evidence, I found one of the metal angle brackets that supported the wood arm of the windlass.

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One middle bracket is still there at the scene.

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Another element of the legend has come under attack from skeptics.

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The initial identity of the spaceman came from TJ Weems, a local member of the U.S. Army Signal

Corps.

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It is argued that Weems was only the town blacksmith and in no way an expert on astronomy, like the newspaper claimed.

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According to Charlie Stevens, TJ Weems was also an amateur astronomer, had his own telescope and was widely known as a lay expert on astronomy.

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So that argument that he didn't have any knowledge is pretty specious too.

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Despite the many explanations that researchers, journalists and skeptics have for the Aurora legend, there is at least one thing that everyone can agree on.

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As far as I'm concerned, it's still a good story. It's a good story. I wasn't around then, but my granddad could tell a pretty good story.

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In Texas, we have an old saying that never let the truth stand in the way of a good story.

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It has been more than 100 years since the quiet of Aurora, Texas was allegedly shattered by the crash of a mysterious airship.

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Like the incident in Roswell, New Mexico that supposedly took place in 1947, the truth may never be known.

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But to some ufologists, this case from 1897 may be the key to solving the whole UFO phenomena once and for all.

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The significance of the Royd counter was that there was a body left to be studied.

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00:35:17,200 --> 00:35:24,200

And that there were hundreds of sightings of the same description over the central United States during that time.

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We see what happened at Roswell, we see what happened at some other sightings.

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00:35:28,200 --> 00:35:37,200

But this one held the answer and because it was before modern day censorship, that's a key. It's still there. No one went in to cover it up.

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While this former boom town used to boast 3,000 inhabitants, there are only about 400 people living there today.

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00:35:49,200 --> 00:35:56,200

The town may have decreased in size, but the controversy surrounding its most famous visitor has only grown.

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If nothing else, the tale of the mysterious airship crash has served to polarize Aurora, dividing believers from skeptics.

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Aurora's big claim to fame has to be the legend. It's the thing that has lasted longer than anything else.

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Some people think it's a funny joke going around. They do not believe that this actually happened.

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00:36:21,200 --> 00:36:26,200

And they'll laugh at you because they say it's such a hoax.

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00:36:26,200 --> 00:36:33,200

Well, we're dealing with belief systems here. And I found this when I first began to investigate this in the little town of Aurora.

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00:36:33,200 --> 00:36:39,200

About half the people said no, it was just a big hoax. The other half said no, it really happened.

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00:36:39,200 --> 00:36:45,200

I had a feeling that they thought people were laughing at the little town of Aurora.

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00:36:45,200 --> 00:36:50,200

Even though the population there now had absolutely nothing to do with the airship mystery,

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00:36:50,200 --> 00:36:56,200

I just always got the sense that this is not something they wanted to embrace.

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00:36:57,200 --> 00:37:07,200

Despite the town's ambivalence towards its famous legend, in 1976 they installed a plaque at the cemetery that supposedly houses the aliens' remains.

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00:37:07,200 --> 00:37:16,200

Since the actual stone marker was stolen more than 30 years ago, it is impossible to know the precise location of the pilot's body.

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00:37:17,200 --> 00:37:26,200

To me, the only thing at this point that was satisfying, it's pretty obvious we're not going to find a grave site to dig in.

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So, secondary, let's go to the well.

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Although the windmill above the well no longer exists, the former Proctor property was purchased by Brawley Oates in 1945.

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Longstanding rumors hold that the well on the property was contaminated by radioactive debris.

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More than 100 years later, the legend has also grown to include a mysterious patch of ground that lacks vegetation.

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00:37:54,200 --> 00:38:02,200

When the mayor shared details of this rumor with Hayden Hughes in 2005, it renewed his interest in solving the mystery.

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00:38:02,200 --> 00:38:13,200

Rour to me had the most possibility of providing evidence that could confirm or deny the existence of the airships and the occupant.

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00:38:13,200 --> 00:38:21,200

And when we left empty handed, I saw it kind of as a failure because the evidence was still there.

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00:38:21,200 --> 00:38:30,200

Maybe two feet under where we were standing, but still we were unable to walk away with something we could really go forth and say,

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00:38:30,200 --> 00:38:34,200

alright, here's something, let's investigate that further.

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00:38:34,200 --> 00:38:44,200

For the first time in over a quarter of a century, Hayden decided to revisit the place where it all began, the crash site.

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00:38:44,200 --> 00:38:52,200

This is the alleged crash site of the airship. We're on top of the hill, valley all the way around.

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00:38:52,200 --> 00:39:01,200

This is where Proctor had his property. His windmill was here and we had a well which was later cemented in.

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00:39:01,200 --> 00:39:08,200

Certain areas are still accessible, but this fence stands in front of Judge Proctor's original well.

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00:39:08,200 --> 00:39:17,200

Several requests to gain access to that part of the property were made for this program, but no calls were returned.

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00:39:18,200 --> 00:39:24,200

My gut feeling tells me we're on to it and there's something there and I can't dispel that.

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00:39:24,200 --> 00:39:32,200

So close to where he feels the answers to the airship mystery lie, Hayden Hughes' frustration is palpable.

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We have maybe one of the most scientific finds of the 20th century right here behind us and we can't get to it because of this big bird cage that's been built over and cemented in.

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00:39:43,200 --> 00:39:51,200

There's a ceiling below the evidence that may have contaminated the soil around it that is keeping vegetation from growing today.

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00:39:51,200 --> 00:40:02,200

And if it could be possible to go down, dig up, whatever, that might be what it takes to put an end to this legend over all these years.

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00:40:03,200 --> 00:40:15,200

If we could find out what is in that well, we would know if there's any radiation occurring there or even parts of the Christ site.

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00:40:15,200 --> 00:40:21,200

When that craft blew up and exploded, there could be pieces down in that well.

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00:40:22,200 --> 00:40:29,200

Most people search for just what's on the surface and don't take the time to really dig down and find out.

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00:40:29,200 --> 00:40:33,200

You know it's interesting to note that we're back here where it all started.

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00:40:34,200 --> 00:40:46,200

Right here on this very site. Time has come and gone, a lot of stories has come and gone, until we can get on the other side, until we can get some good soil samples or get down in the well.

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00:40:46,200 --> 00:40:52,200

This is where the story is going to say, just rolling along and continuing to grow.

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00:40:52,200 --> 00:41:07,200

If the entire legend of the airship crash of 1897 is a hoax, then an amazing practical joke has been played on everyone by S.E. Hayden, the man who wrote the original newspaper article for the Dallas Morning News.

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00:41:07,200 --> 00:41:14,200

But without concrete evidence, ufologists can neither debunk the hoax nor prove the legend to be true.

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There are lots of legends and stories going around that are passed from word of mouth and through newspaper clippings and so on.

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But we deal with the facts. We investigate UFOs and we try to prove beyond the question of a doubt when we investigate a case that it was a UFO.

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I would say that the probability of the crash actually happening is probably 85%. I think there's strong evidence for that.

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The Aurora spaceship crash of 1897, I believe, is the smoking gun of the UFO controversy.

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Because in earlier years, the debunkers would say, well, it's just misidentified aircraft, satellites, commercial military, maybe even secret government test craft.

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00:42:04,200 --> 00:42:13,200

Well, I often thought, wouldn't it be great if we had a well-documented instance of the UFO before any of that was in the air?

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And we do with the Aurora Texas crash of 1897.

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00:42:17,200 --> 00:42:29,200

We are fairly sure there was a crash at that site. I mean, all the physical evidence, all the stories about the people that were available at the time, all go together and they all fit.

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It's not a mistaken identity and it's not a tall tale.

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My conclusion in a nutshell, something happened in 1897 that to this day we cannot explain.

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00:42:46,200 --> 00:42:55,200

We can eliminate a lot of stuff. We know it wasn't a balloon. We know it wasn't an airplane. What was it? I don't know.

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00:42:55,200 --> 00:43:03,200

UFO? Obviously. Where the UFO came from, that's the big mystery that, quite frankly, will probably never be solved.

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00:43:03,200 --> 00:43:08,200

Will the ultimate truth ever be known about the Aurora case?

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00:43:08,200 --> 00:43:10,200

I don't know.

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00:43:10,200 --> 00:43:19,200

I would like to think that there is an alien in the grave, but it may come down to there's nothing in the grave. That's the legend.