

1948

JULY 24

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VA.

Incident #144 a and b Blackstone, Virginia -- 24 July 1948

The object reported in incident #144a & #144b was very probably a meteor.

It should be noted that this object was traveling in the same direction as the one reported in #144, although separated by some 400 miles. It is not unusual for a fireball to be seen along a path several hundred miles long. There is a time discrepancy of 15 minutes between the observations, however; any connection between #144 and 144a-b (in considering the meteoric hypothesis) necessarily hinges on whether this time difference was real, or not.

Source: Hynek, Project Grudge, Final Report, Appendix 3.

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ALA.
VA.

Incident #144 Near Montgomery, Alabama -- 24 July 1948
 #144a, b Near Blackstone, Virginia - 24 July 1948

The famous "space ship" sighting reported in incident #144 should be compared to #168 and #206, and also with 144a and b, which together constitute a separate incident if facts are correct as given.

For #144, there is no astronomical explanation if we accept the report at face value. The sheer improbability of the facts, as stated, particularly in the absence of any known aircraft in the vicinity, makes it necessary to see whether any other explanation, even though far-fetched, can be considered. The two reliable pilots obviously saw something. If one extracts from their reports parts of the description -- "tremendous bursts of flame," "gigar-shaped," "disappeared into a cloud," "orange-colored flame," "time in sight five-to-ten seconds" -- one sees that this much, at least, could be satisfied by a brilliant, slow-moving meteor. The orange-red flame is particularly suggestive. It is pertinent also, that the only passenger awake at the time the two pilots sighted the object gave a description that does not tally with that of a "space ship" but does agree with that of a meteor.

It will have to be left to the psychologists to tell us whether the ~~xxxx~~ immediate trail of a bright meteor could produce the subjective impression of a ship with lighted windows. Considering only the Chile-Whitted sighting, the hypothesis seems very improbable. However, not included in the summary but mentioned in the voluminous collateral material is the report of a qualified Robins Air Base observer, who stated that he saw a cylindrical object trailing a red flash of fire, but did not discern any windows or a double deck; (admittedly, from the ground he would have ~~xxxx~~ had less opportunity to do so). The time of his observation is exactly one hour earlier, if both times are given in EST (as is stated). It is interesting to note, however, that Macon, Georgia, and Montgomery, Alabama, are both on the line of flight as described by the Montgomery observers.

If these two sightings refer to the same object, there are the possible interpretations: One is that the object was some type of aircraft, regardless of its bizarre nature. The distance between Macon and Montgomery is approximately 200 miles. From all reports the object was traveling definitely faster than 200 MPH, so would have covered the distance between these two points in much less time than noted. (The schedule is, of course, correct for an ordinary aircraft.)

The other possible explanation is that the object was a fireball, in which case it would have covered the distance from Macon to Montgomery in a matter of a minute or ~~xx~~ two. If the Montgomery observers had been using daylight savings time (do regular commercial airlines connecting cities using daylight savings time operate on it?), then there would be no discrepancy in the time.

The conclusion seems to be this: If the difference in time is real, the object was some form of aircraft traveling at 200 MPH. If there is no time difference, the object must have been an extraordinary meteor. The observation from two such widely separated points is the focal point of the investigation -- if one assumes that the same object was observed in the two cases. That there were two separate objects can most likely be ruled out by the sheer improbability of more than one such extraordinary object being seen on the same night, travelling over the same course, exactly one hour apart.

Source: Hynek, Project Grudge, Final Report, Appendix B.