

Preliminary Notes on the Adamski Scout Ship Photos

Joel Carpenter

April 2, 2012

Summary

The series of photos of a “Scout Ship from Venus” allegedly taken by “contactee” George Adamski and associates in November and December 1952 has provided an interesting puzzle from the time they were first published. While obviously poor-quality fabrications, the images had an almost incalculable influence on popular culture's image of what a “flying saucer” looked like, becoming a widely-reported UFO configuration and appearing in various forms in untold numbers of print publications, movies and television shows.

Since the photos obviously showed a nearby, small model, rather than a distant sizable vehicle, it would seem that it would have been trivial to identify the objects used in its construction, and many attempts have been made over the years without a definitive solution. Quite early on, as Adamski's co-author Desmond Leslie disingenuously noted, it was suggested that it was a metal lamp-shade of some type, but conclusive identification remained elusive. One possible reason for this is that the model was actually an assembly of disparate components that changed the appearance of the main portion of the object enough to conceal its true nature.

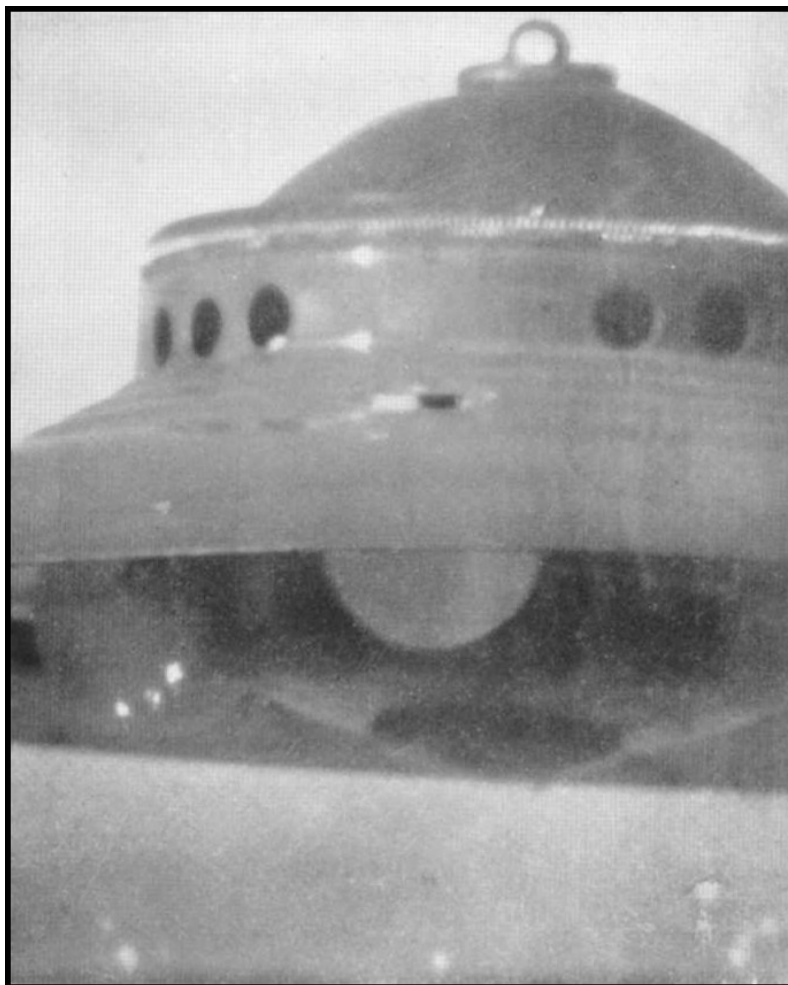
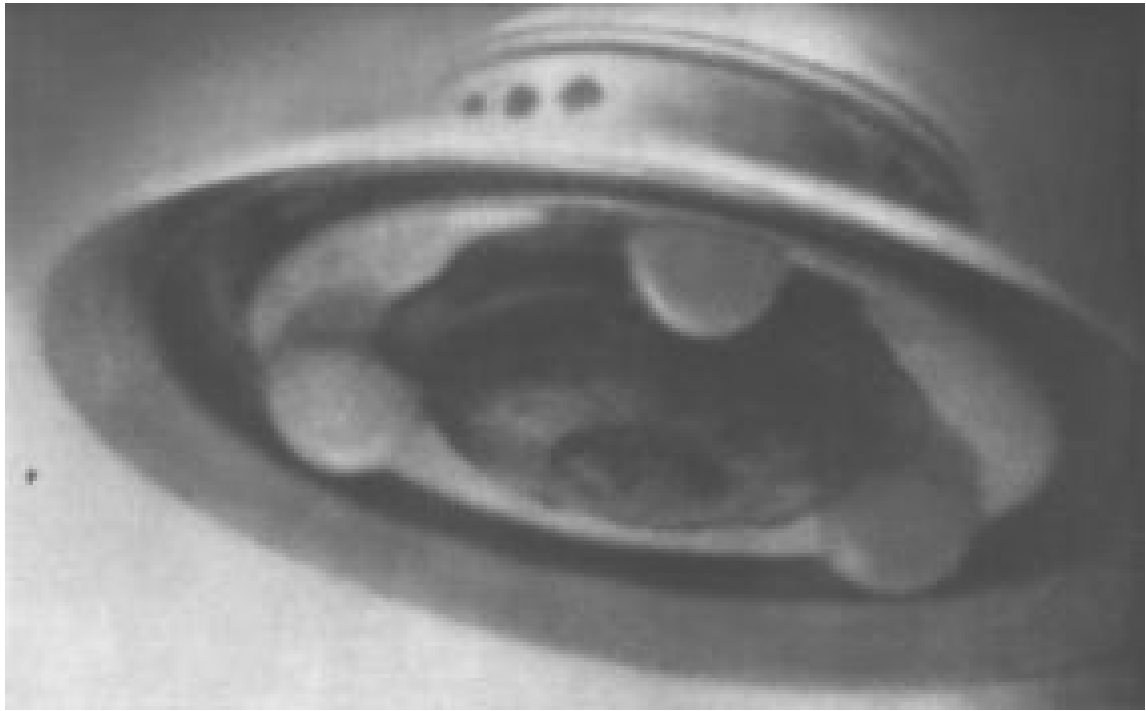
It now appears that the main portion of the object can be identified as the shade, or reflector, of a widely-available pressurized-gas lamp sold in the US from the mid 1930s through at least the early 1940s.

Adamski's Photos

Adamski published several photos of what he described as a Venusian Scout Ship, allegedly about 10 m in diameter, in flight. He claimed that three were taken with an antique wooden box camera attached to a 6-inch Newtonian telescope, and a fourth was taken with a Brownie camera by an associate at a later date.

Briefly, the main photos show a rather odd-looking bell-shaped object, highly atypical of most previous “flying saucer” reports. The two most well-known are shown below. As researcher Kentaro Mori has pointed out, many of the alleged Adamski photos in existence are either highly-retouched versions of these, or completely re-illustrated, fabricated copies.¹

¹ <http://forgetomori.com/2007/ufos/ufo-photos-adamski-scout-ships/>



Brief Discussion of Methodology

Like many previous researchers, my opinion was that the object Adamski photographed was a model, probably something in the range of 30 to 45 cm in diameter. This was based on the depth of field seen in the photos; i.e., the near edge of the object's rim is in focus, while more distant portions of the object become progressively blurrier. This seems characteristic of a small object photographed at close range, rather than an airplane-sized object photographed through a telescope.

Additionally, simply because the object had not been previously identified, it seemed probable that the model was a unique assembly of disparate components rather than being some repurposed available object that would be easily detected.

The object appeared to be made of rather thin-gauge stamped sheet metal. Its rim appears to be dented in some of the photos. It also appears to have some sort of slot-like feature in the "skirt" facing the camera, below and between the "portholes" on the "turret" – a feature that eventually would help confirm the identity of the object.

My starting assumption was that it was a lampshade, simply because of its appearance. I also suspected that it was a lamp manufactured in the 1930s because of the distinctive "ribbing" detail visible below the object's "portholes." These ribs are a characteristic of the art deco industrial design movement of the 1930s and are typical of decorative elements applied to machine age architecture and industrial objects from the middle of the 1930s.² While Adamski critics such as Donald Menzel had suggested that the object was a commonly-available "chicken brooder" heat lamp, the decorative ribbing suggested that it was something intended for less industrial, more domestic uses.

I believed that with the resources now available to researcher, such as Google Image Search, digitized copies of old catalogs, eBay, and similar sources, it should be possible to finally determine what this object actually was.

My initial conjecture was that it was a shade from an electric desk lamp, because such lamps were very widely available in the 1930s and most featured domed metal shades with decorative styling elements, such as this example:



² http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1991-12-01/entertainment/9104180436_1_lines-industrial-design-barriers

This lamp's shade is similar in overall shape to the Adamski object, but while it certainly features the “deco ribs,” it lacks the Scout Ship's unique “turret” and “portholes.” Continuing to research this type of desk lamp, I noticed that few had vent holes. The implication seemed to be that electric lamps did not require extensive venting, and that the Adamski object, if a lampshade, may have been from a different, hotter-running type of lamp. Possibly a kerosene lantern?

In searching for images of modern kerosene lamps, I soon came across a collector website devoted to a type of lantern that was unfamiliar to me: gas pressure lanterns.³ These could burn gasoline or naphtha and produced a hot, white light. The website contains nearly two thousand images of these lanterns from companies from around the world. Assuming that Adamski's object was of American manufacture, I skimmed the site's images of US-made lamps and within minutes was able to locate the image below. The shade was clearly the Adamski Scout Ship's main section.



An unusual lantern design from Prentiss-Wabers Co., this Preway Model L46S was also made for Sears and sold as Model 742-461. The globe on this model has a hole drilled in it for lighting the mantles. This lantern is very heavy, weighing about 7 pounds.

[Source: <http://tgmarsh.faculty.noctrl.edu/lantern/uslantpz.html>]

Pursuing information on the Prentiss-Waber company, I soon came across another gas pressure lamp collector website, [Classic Pressure Lamps](#), which featured more photos of, and information about, the Prentiss-Waber lamps and those manufactured by the Turner Brass company. These pages showed that models with both blue and red shades were available in addition to the brown version sold by Sears, and indicated that the lanterns were sold by both Sears and the Spiegel mail-order catalog company over a period of many years, priced in the \$6 range. In other words, the lamps were commonly-available items.

3 <http://tgmarsh.faculty.noctrl.edu/lantern/>



A Spiegel "Brooklure" lamp with a red shade.

A Sears lamp of this type was obtained for reference. Its height is about 33 cm/13 inches (not counting the handle), and the shade diameter is just over 10.5 inches/26.7 cm.





As suspected, the shade is made from stamped steel. It is coated with a shiny, porcelain-like heat-resistant material.

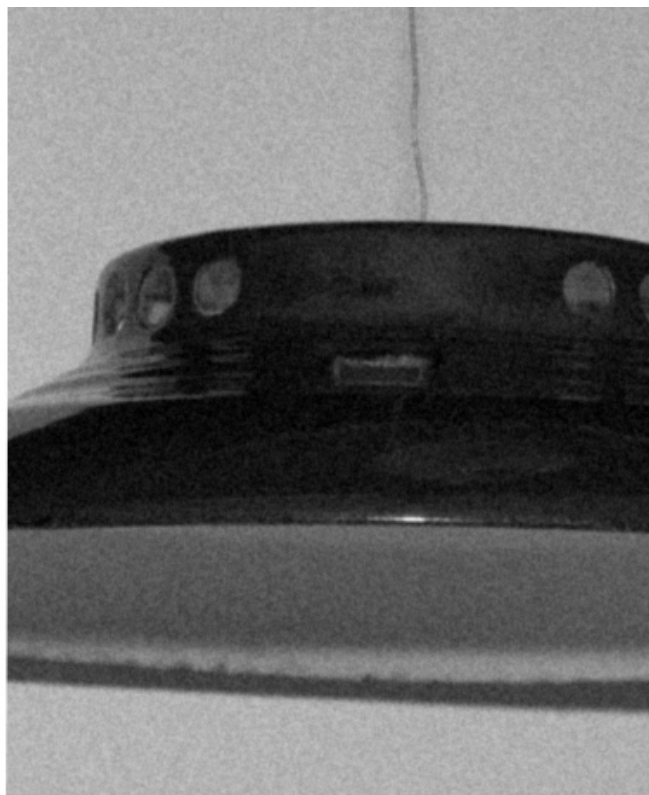
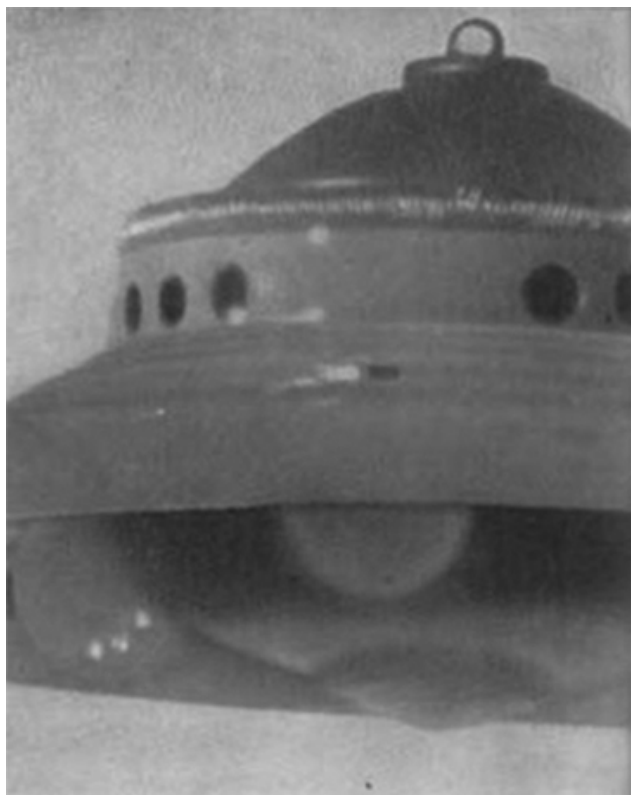
The slot-like features in the Adamski photos are explained by the fact that the shade has two slots that allow passage of the posts that connect the handle to the body of the lamp. The shade is attached to the lamp by a single threaded nut and washer. When the nut is removed, the spring-like handle is simply bent slightly and removed, allowing removal of the shade.





Adamski's object was likely constructed from a red-shaded unit, unless it was re-painted for the photos. The brown shade of this Sears model seems much too dark to replicate the appearance of the Scout Ship.

The shade was suspended from a wire and photographed in a position approximating the angle of the Adamski “side-view” photo. The slot-like feature is clearly visible in both photos, as is the section of the “turret” that lacks “portholes.”



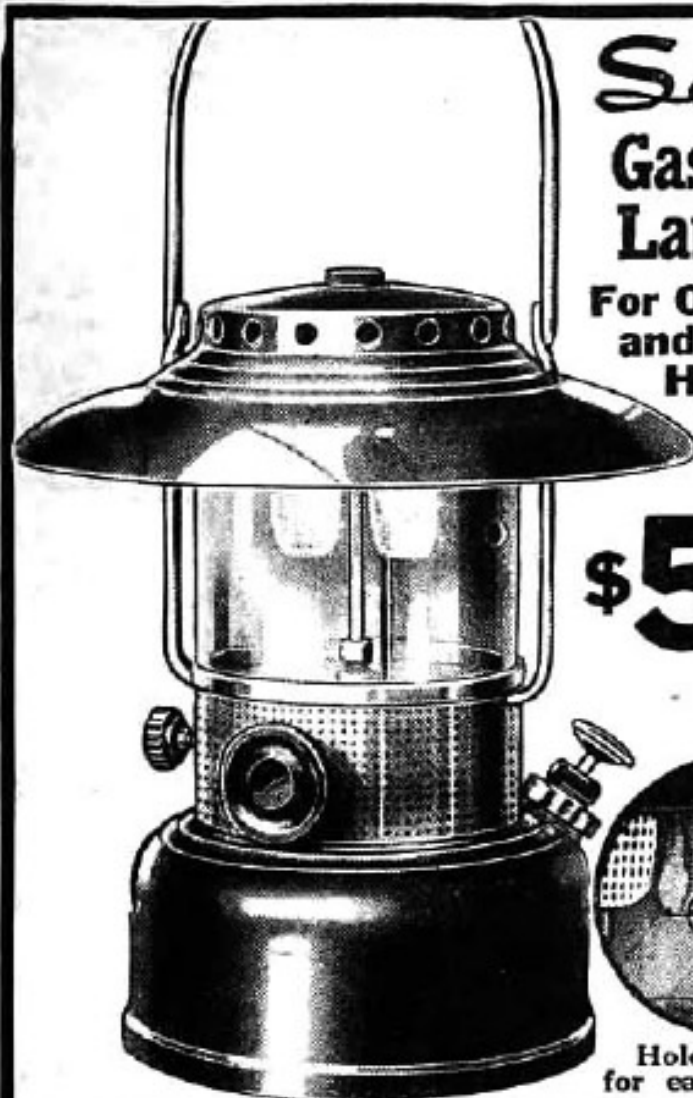
Aside from the obvious color difference, there are subtle differences in the size and spacing of the holes.

I contacted members of the pressure lamp collector forum for their opinion concerning these issues. They noted that since the lamp was produced over a period of years, possibly by different manufacturers, slight “running changes” such as these are not unusual. They concurred that the Adamski object was a shade from a lamp of this type and provided several pages of Sears catalogs from the 1935-41 period showing this model.

Conclusion

Clearly the Adamski object was fabricated from several components, including a metallic upper dome, ball-shaped landing-gear, and other parts. Identification of these components is pending. But it is now clear that the main bell-shaped portion of the Adamski “Venusian Scout Ship” was the shade of a commonly-available lantern made in the US in the 1930s. More details about this research, including discussion of the camera and telescope claimed to have been used, will be published in the near future.

1935 Spring



Sears Gasoline Lantern

For Outdoors
and in the
Home

\$5⁹⁸



Hole in chimney
for easy lighting.

WINDPROOF! BUGPROOF!

- Heat-resisting 1-pc. glass chimney. No overlaps to cause shadows or interrupt light.
- Built-in pump. • Bakelite valve handles.

Convenient and economical because the fully automatic tip cleaner, an exclusive Sears feature, prolongs life of generator, eliminating nuisance and reducing the usual cost of frequent replacement.

Beautiful enough to use as a table lamp. Lights instantly without preheating generator. Cannot be blown out. Shade can be tilted same as horizontal reflector. Broad, red canopy, white underneath, reflects bright, soft light. Black enameled tank, holds $1\frac{1}{4}$ qts., enough for 15 hrs. Ideal for hen houses, dairy barns, road stands, picnics—wherever light is needed. Shpg. wt., 8 lbs. 12 oz.

6 H 7427—Complete with 2 mantles.....\$5.98

**Sears
De Luxe
Lantern**
•
**Instant
Lighting**
•
Windproof
•
Bugproof

\$5⁹⁸

Exclusively Sears

- Two-Burner type.
- Heat-resisting glass chimney.
- Hole in chimney for easy lighting. No over-laps to cause shadows or interrupt light. Convenient!
- Built-in pump . . . Bakelite valve handles. Economical!

Fully automatic tip cleaner, an exclusive Sears feature. Prolongs life of generator.

Beautiful enough to use as a table lamp. Cannot be blown out. Blue canopy, white underneath, reflects bright, soft light. Dark gray tank with midnight blue stripes. Holds 1¼-qts. gasoline, enough for 15 hours. Ideal for hen houses, dairy barns, road stands, picnics. Shipping wt., 8 lbs. 12 oz.

6 K 7465—Complete with 2 mantles . . . **\$5.98**

