

Reprint
Topside No. 20,
Spring, 1966

THE MISTERIOUS CHUNK OF HARDWARE AT OTTAWA

On the outside property of the Headquarters of the Ottawa New Sciences Club there lies a large piece of metal - an unidentified object which has so far baffled all attempts at positive identification and over which an aura of mystery hangs as to its exact composition, purpose, origin and most of all, the unusual circumstances surrounding the finding of this large chunk of hardware in the St. Lawrence River of Quebec. This piece of metal measures about 4 ft. by 6 ft. and is roughly oval in shape, somewhat like an inverted mushroom, i.e., flat on top and roughly hemispherical on the underside. A plug or post about 9" in diameter, at 90° to the flat surface, penetrates the centre of the mass and extends through top and bottom surfaces. A smaller protuberance, which may be the remains of a 2½" pipe, appears out of the flat surface near the plug. The weight is estimated at about 3,000 pounds. The whole is made up of layers of material which evidently have been subjected to very high temperatures and pressure. The material is ferrous, extremely hard, and resistant to all attempts to cut or dismantle it. It is faintly magnetic until melted when it seems to acquire approximately the magnetic permeability of mild steel.

As a couple of articles on this mystery metal have recently appeared in French language newspapers containing a number of inaccuracies with regard to the facts of the case as we know them in Ottawa, we propose to give our readers a brief account of the history of the metal as far as we know it.

According to an early account which appeared in a French language newspaper in Quebec - on June 12, 1960, between 3 and 4 a.m., EDT, a sonic boom rocked the area around Quebec City. At about the same time, a fiery object fell out of the sky splitting at about one to two thousand feet altitude, into two pieces, one somewhat larger than the other. Both fell into the St. Lawrence River, near Les Ecureils, about 20 miles up river from Quebec City. The smaller piece was quite close to the shore and visible at low tide; the other lay close to the shipping lane and was completely submerged.

It should, however, be pointed out that when, shortly afterwards, a group of Club members carried out an investigation at the actual location, they were unable to find anyone in the Les Ecureils area who had actually heard or seen the metal fall - strange, in such a small town. So the manner in which the metal arrived at the scene still remains a mystery.

The Area. At Les Ecureils, the river bank drops sharply to a relatively flat shale bed which extends out for nearly a quarter of a mile to the deep water shipping channel. The channel is separated from the shale area by a jumble of large boulders. The river is tidal so that the area of the find varies from dry to a maximum depth of water of about 1½ feet.