



THE SECRETS OF DELLSCHAU: The Sonora Aero Club and the Airships of the 1800s, A True Story

Dennis G. Crenshaw

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Charles A. A. Dellschau was born on June 4, 1830, in Brandenburg, Prussia, and immigrated to the United States in 1853, first settling in Texas. The historical record falls silent until 1860, when he is again shown living in Texas, where he marries Antonia Hilt the following year. The so-called "lost years" of the secretive Dellschau's life became a matter of controversy when his voluminous, illustrated notebooks surfaced nearly a half-century after his death in 1923 at age 93. Dellschau literally spent the last 20 years of his life closeted away in an attic apartment, creating a fantastical body of art that continues to fascinate. Indeed, today Dellschau is recognized as one of America's leading visionary artists, ranked alongside such world luminaries as Henry Darger and Adolf Wölfl. A single page of one of his notebooks now fetches thousands of dollars - and there are thousands of such pages, frenetic productivity being a hallmark of visionary artists. But Dellschau's work - consisting of ink and watercolor illustrations of fanciful flying machines to which he frequently pasted newspaper clippings, or "press blooms" as he called them - appears to tell a coherent story of the Sonora (California) Aero Club. Using an anti-gravity gas purportedly invented by one of its members, The Club allegedly turned out a series of experimental aircraft some 50 years before the Wright Brothers first took wing. A mere flight of artistic fancy? Or did Dellschau actually spend his lost years documenting wildly improbable inventions? Were the Aero Club's airships also responsible for many UFO sightings in America? "The Secrets of Dellschau: The Sonora Aero Club & The Airships of The 1800s, a True Story" is the first book-length account of Dellschau's life and work.

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