

# EXHIBITION HALL





# ANTIQUE SPACE

## A CROSS-OVER EVENT

And we're back!

It's been a long time. Too long. Since last we met, I had a couple of kids. I won another Hugo. I wrote a lot, I got laid off from the job I had for 20 years, and then I got a new job.

All in all, it's been interesting.

I'm hoping to bring Exhibition Hall back, with short issues every month. I hope so, at least.

Why now?

Well, a few months ago, I had an idea. I wanted to look into the world of space, outer space, the cool relentless vacuum of outer space,, but I wanted to look at how space was viewed in the past. Then again, I also wanted to look into how we've played with those ideas from the past in the present. I really wanted to look at space science from the past, and Bob Hole did a great job looking at the man who pretty much popularized Mars for the world. I wanted to look at proto-science fiction from Japan and Greece, about early science fiction films, and what I'm covering in this issue, an Antique Space dark ride. It's a cross-over with The Drink Tank and Journey Planet, and it's been a lot of fun!

The interesting thing about this cross-over is that it highlights some of the people I am a massive champion of. Bob Hole is one, Vanessa Applegate (my wife) is another. Stephanie Alford, an amazing writer and reviewer, is someone you should be reading (and you can read her fantastic words at 7 Stillwell - <https://www.lunisea.com>). The covers by Sara Felix (Hugo nominee!!!) and Hillary Pearlman-Bliss are both amaze! Chuck Serface, three-timer on the Hugo ballot, Hugo winners Alissa McKersie and James Bacon were editors too! Working with great people always makes me happy!

What's been going on in Steampunk? Well, there are still cons, though fewer now. Every year, things like Gaslight Gathering make a splash.

The fiction's still comin' out, and some of it is great. I need to find new reviewers!

In fact, if you've got any content, or comments on the issues, send 'em to [johnnyeponymous@gmail.com](mailto:johnnyeponymous@gmail.com)! The next deadline is January 21st.

The next issue I'll be writing about *Future Perfect*, one of my all-time favorite anthologies. A lot of great anthologies are out there, and I'll be talking about a few of them as I keep 'er going.

I did the cover. The interior art is by Vanessa. I wrote this, and the article, and I'm so glad to be back!

---

---

## ANTIQUE SPACE - DEC. 2019

-EDITORS-

CHRIS GARCIA - ALISSA MCKERSIE - JAMES BACON - CHUCK SERFACE





# A TRIP TO THE MOON.. ...BUT NOT THE ONE YOU'RE THINKING OF

Let's say you've got 50 cents and you happen to be in the very early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century America. You're kinda in the money, since you could have gone to Delmonico's, got yourself a thing of their famous Blue Point Oysters, and still had a dime left over for a cup of coffee. That's a lot, no? So, with that four bits, you could 100% go on a trip to the moon.

Well, you could ride A Trip to the Moon at the great Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

Historical types, or fans of Sondheim, may know that President William McKinley was assassinated at the Exposition, but that was not all that happened there. No, it was not merely an Assassination theme park. Instead, it was a World's Fair, more or less, and had dozens of attractions and displays. One of the attractions pretty much changed how theme parks presented things forever after. The ride was literally the big-budget action-packed thrill ride that completely predicted everything from Disneyland to Universal Studios.

So, the Pan-American Exposition was a big deal. There'd been a bunch of World's Fairs all over the place, mostly in Europe and the US. The US had the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, which led to the rise of the legendary murderer H.H. Holmes. There was one in Philly in 1899, and a few others in places like Nashville and

Omaha. These fairs had pretty amazing displays, often countries would send their most impressive mechanical innovations, plus often problematic displays like Human Zoos. One of the things that these exhibitions did was introduce film to new audiences, and they were thoroughly filmed, too. One of the most impressive things they were doing was changing the way people got Fairground entertainment. Side Shows, walking gardens, and other such entertainment had been the rule, but that was changing. The roller coaster, of wooden make, came about in the 1880s, while the Ferris Wheel was introduced at the 1893 Chicago exposition. These were pretty much the start of the modern amusement park. Footage of these things running are kinda terrifying to modern eyes, as they look like everyone who rode them would end up with terrible injuries! They also look like a lot of fun! There was a great short with Thelma Todd and ZaSu Pitts that has some great footage of Coney Island in the early 1930s ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnB\\_WqEGPLo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnB_WqEGPLo)) and it looks pretty scary!

So, the Ferris Wheel was a huge deal, and roller coasters were popping up left and right, but the idea of the Dark Ride hadn't really been born yet. There were rides where riders would hop into a horse-drawn carriage and be driven through dioramas, but the Dark Ride, where a mechanical conveyance carries riders through a staged area, hadn't really popped up. There were a number of walk-through attractions that presaged it, much like today's Haunted Houses, but you have to remember we were pretty much in the beginning of the Electricity Age!

At the 1901 Buffalo exhibition, inventor Frederick Thompson delivered a ride based on the film *A Trip to the Moon* by Georges Melies. You've seen the film, it's a classic, and it has served as an influence on generations of artists, including Smashing Pumpkins. The moon was not fully understood, the idea of craters as the sites of great impact wasn't fully bought into until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but we had power-enough telescopes to know there were no seas, no vegetation, no great civilizations. It didn't matter, because the Moon was so distant that it could never be a part of people's lives, and Melies could play with the imagery of what COULD be, in the deepest of imaginations. This film was the biggest hit up until that point in film history. It played everywhere, and the thing was incredibly widely pirated. These were the most widely-known images in the world in 1902.

Of course, you'll notice that the Exposition took place in 1901...

Yes, there is the thought that the imagery deployed by Melies was influenced from the ride. This is a HUGE deal when you consider how iconic those images from Melies film are. The story was ripped from the pages of Verne and Wells, and a little bit from the works of Jacques Offenback, but the imagery is so similar that it can't be ignored! There is the idea that this is just what science fiction looked like at the time, sort of a collective unconsciousness that gave everything a similar look-and-feel.

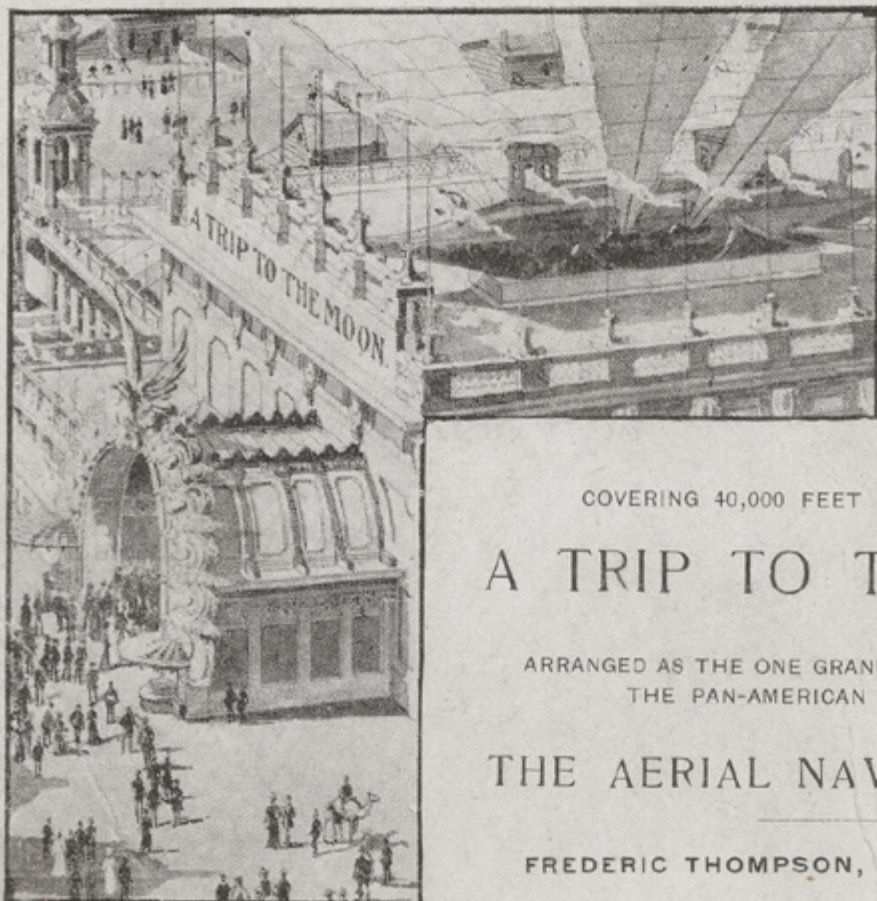
Thompson applied for a patent on a device called a "Scenic Apparatus" which is a key patent in the evolution of the theme park. The big thing about Amusement Parks in the pre-1900s was that they required a lot of space for little thrills. There was a great exhibit at the Museum of London on the kind of English parks that would have been considered amusement parks in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. When Americans started to want more and more thrills, it was key to get a lot of land, and there was a lot out in the US, but even then, it wasn't enough to have one roller coaster, or one Ferris Wheel. You had to offer several, and that just ate up more and more room! The Dark Ride allowed you to take a small space and have a dependable ride... even if that's not exactly what *A Trip to the Moon* was. The ride was HUGE, and long compared to today's dark rides, roughly 30 minutes start-to-finish. So, I guess the 50 cents wasn't unreasonable.

What was the ride like? If you know Melies' *La Voyage dans la Lune* then you've got an idea, even if that came AFTER Thompson.

You see, you boarded an Airship-like carriage where you sat on deck chairs. The Ship was suspended from the ceiling, so it kinda rocked, and when the wind machines started blowing, the lights and sound effects were on, and the wings flapping, you would sway and rock and it would at least somewhat simulate flying. At that point, there were no airplanes, and I don't think we'd seen a dirigible in the US yet, so it was likely as close as any rider would have gotten to flight. The effect at the time must have been quite effective, but there was more. The trip started with a lecture from the pilot. Then you climbed on and the system began to take you along the overhead track. After the voyage on the Ornithopter/Airship, you would arrive at The Moon! You'd get off, and there was a setpiece that was The Moon! It was a huge, 40K sqft. Warehouse with 80 foot ceilings!

Now, this is almost an inverted version of Disneyland's Haunted Mansion. There, you walk through a few set pieces and then you get on your conveyance. Here, you start with a lecture from a 'pilot' and then it's on to the conveyance, and then you end up in the set-piece of the moon. The idea in Disneyland was to make people feel like the line for the actual ride is worth the wait, and it allows for more people to come in every hour because it can use those areas as a series of holding zones. That didn't seem to be a concern for Thompson, since





THE GREAT  
LANDING  
DOCK

PAN-AMERICAN  
EXPOSITION.

COVERING 40,000 FEET OF GROUND SPACE.

A TRIP TO THE MOON

ARRANGED AS THE ONE GRAND NOVEL FEATURE FOR  
THE PAN-AMERICAN EXPOSITION BY

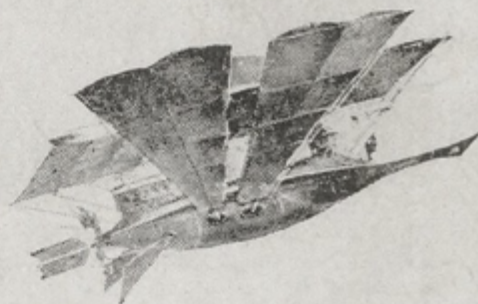
THE AERIAL NAVIGATION CO.

FREDERIC THOMPSON, GENERAL MANAGER.

*Pan Am 1901 XD851*  
"GET OFF THE EARTH" VIA THE GREAT AIRSHIP ROUTE.

THE AERIAL  
NAVIGATION CO.

HAS 30 AIRSHIPS  
FLYING DAILY FROM THE  
PAN-AMERICAN  
EXPOSITION  
GROUNDS ON



A TRIP TO THE MOON



PAN-AMERICAN EXPOSITION,  
BUFFALO, 1901.

he probably wanted people to linger in the last set.

The set was actually full of performers. The moon was peopled by Selenites, actual human performers, who ran around and gamboled and japed! There were Moon Maidens, who did a little dance performance. There was a Moon Palace, quite grand from every description I've seen. The area was HUGE! I've seen it described as a hangar 80 feet high with more than 40K sqft.. There was a giftshop, because you always gotta push merch. Guests would leave through the mouth of a MoonCalf, which was cool. When you were off the airship and in the hangar, you would see Selenites (which were also heavily featured in the film) and meet The Man in the Moon! The entire thing was a show, and I believe it was more than fifty percent in the staged area instead of one the airship, which is a neat way to do things because you can dump people in that huge area and not have them clutter up, but your limiting factor is the number of chairs on the airship.

The Visual styling was completely aped by Melies. The surviving photos could easily have been either of the ride or the production of the film. Melies wasn't interested in the aesthetics of Verne, just his storytelling, and this would be a likely place to find good visual information. The ride was a hit, drew people from around the world, and the films of the fair certainly would have showed it.

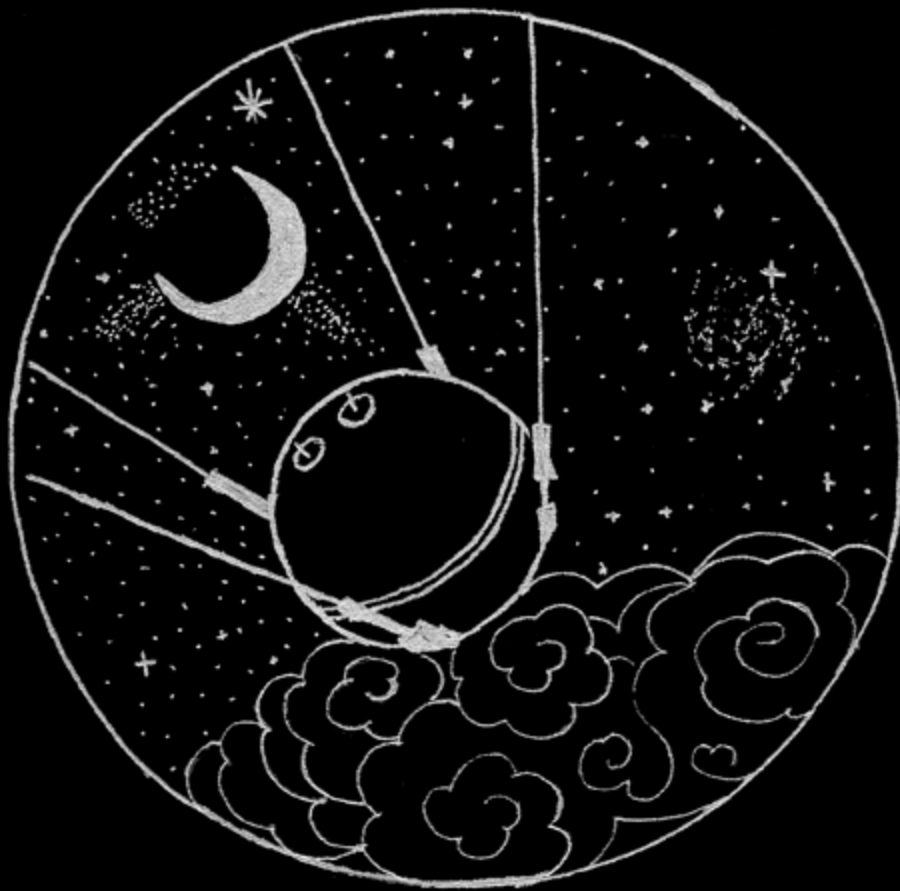
LIKE ANYONE WHO MAKES A TEMPORARY ATTRACTION, Thompson wanted to turn it into a regular thing. He found an investor and launched Luna Park on Coney island. It was located right next to Steeplechase Park, and had been the site of an aquatic show place called Sea Lion Park. Thompson delivered A Trip to the Moon there in 1903, and it was a huge hit. 400,000 people had gone through when it was at the Pan-American Exposition, and with it installed at a permanent location, it was no shock that it was a huge hit. They added a portion of the ride where the airship apparently flew over Manhattan on the way to the moon, which must have been neat!

As time went on, it would have become more and more dated. Films were no longer the simple jump-cut tricks they had been when the ride was introduced in 1901, and by 1910, it wasn't the thing to do as much. In the US, we had J. Stuart Blackton producing much more complex, if less brilliantly designed, trick films, like Princess Nicotine. These were the new blockbusters, so A Trip to the Moon wasn't as big a deal. It's likely that people tied the idea of the ride, which was delivered to Coney Island AFTER Melies' film hit, to the film, which is exactly what Universal Studios has done for decades. And even the aging of the ride effecting its effectiveness. There's a classic internal video from Universal called Your Studio and You (it's on YouTube) that takes Universal to task for not livening up the studio tour. You can see that today, even after the conversion away from Universal being all about the studio lot tour into a full-fledged theme park.

And that's exactly what happened here. Thompson named the park Luna Park, after the ride, and he added rides, but still kept A Trip to the Moon active. It's hard to find the exact date, but it appears when Thompson was done with Luna in 1912, so was A Trip to the Moon.

Thompson sold the park, and it had ups-and-downs after he did. It went into bankruptcy, a few times, and it wasn't successful the last decade and a half. It wasn't financial problems that killed Luna Park – it was a fire. Like many old amusement parks, it was a blaze that brought it down to the ground. It was 1944, and though it had been allowed to remain open through WWII, it did not make it fire-proof. There had been a bunch of fires, most notably two at Dreamland; the first fire meaning it had to be completely re-built, the second serving as the official cause of death.

A Trip to the Moon was probably the first Space-themed amusement park ride, and one of the most influential rides of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that it was a centerpiece for an important park, as Luna Park would inspire many other parks of a similar kind, speaks to the importance of the central ride to its early founding. The combination of straight-ahead dark house ride, which are now found in every theme park, with live actors was neat, and it was the Moon that served as the key element in making it a success. The Moon, more than any other celestial object, can be appreciated from the Earth, and has always had a draw to us, and it's a big reason why there are so many fanciful visions of the moon in literature, on film, and contained in dark house rides around the world.



EXHIBITION HALL #29