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ENTIRE FILE REVIEWED FOR HISTORICAL DECLASSIFICATION

FEDERAL BUREAU

of

INVESTIGATION

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FOIA # 58950 DOCID: 34278200

USE CARE IN HANDLING THIS FILE

Transfer-Call 421

NW#: 58950 DocId: 34278200
Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO:        Director, FBI
FROM: SAC, Oklahoma City
SUBJECT: MADELINE GWINNE MERCHANT
          ATOMIC ENERGY ACT

On October 14, 1947 Mr. P. M. JUVENAL, Security Officer, Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, advised this office that the above named individual appeared at Tinker Field on that date, attempting to obtain employment as a Press Agent at a reported salary of approximately $7,200 a year. She was interviewed by Mr. JUVENAL under the pretense of being a Personnel Counselor, and she advised that she had been writing articles on atomic, nuclear, ionic, and ray warfare for the Atomic Energy Commission. These articles had been submitted to the War Department for ATC. She claimed to have been in close contact with scientists of Los Alamos, New Mexico, and her divorced husband, BENSON MERCHANT, one of the original engineers at that facility. She also claimed to be in close contact with FBI Agent FERGER (phonetic) at Santa Fe, New Mexico. Mrs. MERCHANT advised that she was presently residing with her mother, Mrs. H. E. MYERS, 918 Northeast 15th Street, Oklahoma City.

Mr. JUVENAL advised that MERCHANT did not give any information which could be construed as confidential, but claimed to have written articles under her maiden name, MADELINE GWINNE, on various theories, and that these articles had met with wide acclaim. Mr. JUVENAL expressed the opinion that Mrs. MERCHANT was probably a psychopathic case. She claimed that she was well known to the FBI, AEC, and U. S. Army.

By teletype dated October 14, 1947 the El Paso Office was requested to furnish this office with any information in their files concerning Mrs. MERCHANT.

By teletype of the same date the El Paso Office advised that Mrs. MADELINE GWINNE MERCHANT had visited the Santa Fe Resident Agency, at which time she advised that she had received several reports concerning light objects seen at night and followed by explosions. She claimed to be a student of radio waves and reportedly discussed the above flying objects with officials of AEC, Los Alamos, New Mexico, including SIDNEY NEUBERGER, Chief of Intelligence. MERCHANT was also reported to have written the Secretary of War and other government officials concerning her theories. The El Paso Office advised that officials of the AEC, Los Alamos, consider MERCHANT to be unreliable and possibly not well balanced mentally.

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DATE 05/14/47 BY LKSB

NW#: 58950  DocId: 34278200
Director, FBI

Re: Madeline Gwynne Merchant
Atomic Energy Act

November 19, 1947

On October 22, 1947 Mrs. MERCHANT personally appeared at the Oklahoma City Office, at which time she stated that she wanted to report that on October 10, 1947 a disc was sighted north of Oklahoma City by her step-father and mother. This disc was traveling from the east, apparently going in a semi-circle to the northeast. She requested that this information be furnished to the Bureau for transmittal to appropriate Army officials.

It was apparent that Mrs. MERCHANT is suffering from some mental disorder and it was noticeable that she has dropsy. It is not believed that she is reliable and no investigation will be conducted by this office.

CC: El Paso

DRS: bnm
117-3
Director, FBI

SAC, Oklahoma City

MADELINE GWINNE MERCHANT
ATOMIC ENERGY ACT

November 19, 1947

On October 14, 1947 Mr. F. M. JUVENAL, Security Officer, Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, advised this office that the above named individual appeared at Tinker Field on that date, attempting to obtain employment as a Press Agent at a reported salary of approximately $7,200 a year. She was interviewed by Mr. JUVENAL under the pretext of being a Personnel Counselor, and she advised that she had been writing articles on atomic, nuclear, ionic, and ray warfare for the Atomic Energy Commission. These articles had been submitted to the War Department for AEC. She claimed to have been in close contact with scientists of Los Alamos, New Mexico, and her divorced husband, BENSON MERCHANT, one of the original engineers at that facility. She also claimed to be in close contact with FBI Agent FENNER (phonetic) at Santa Fe, New Mexico. Mrs. MERCHANT advised that she was presently residing with her mother, Mrs. H. E. MYERS, 918 Northeast 16th Street, Oklahoma City.

Mr. JUVENAL advised that MERCHANT did not give any information which could be construed as confidential, but claimed to have written articles under her maiden name, MADELINE GWINNE, on various theories, and that these articles had not with wide acclaim. Mr. JUVENAL expressed the opinion that Mrs. MERCHANT was probably a psychopathic case. She claimed that she was well known to the FBI, AEC, and U. S. Army.

By teletype dated October 14, 1947 the El Paso Office was requested to furnish this office with any information in their files concerning Mrs. MERCHANT.

By teletype of the same date the El Paso Office advised that Mrs. MADELINE GWINNE MERCHANT had visited the Santa Fe Resident Agency, at which time she advised that she had received several reports concerning light objects seen at night and followed by explosions. She claimed to be a student of radio waves and reportedly discussed the above flying objects with officials of AEC, Los Alamos, New Mexico, including SIDNEY NEWBERGER, Chief of Intelligence. MERCHANT was also reported to have written the Secretary of War and other government officials concerning her theories. The El Paso Office advised that officials of the AEC, Los Alamos, consider MERCHANT to be unreliable and possibly not well balanced mentally.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

DATE APPROVED BY 11-30-47

KREY
Director, FBI

Re: Madeline Guyenne Merchant
Atomic Energy Act

November 12, 1947

On October 22, 1947 Mrs. MERCHANT personally appeared at the Oklahoma City Office, at which time she stated that she wanted to report that on October 10, 1947 a disk was sighted north of Oklahoma City by her step-father and mother. This disk was traveling from the east, apparently going in a semi-circle to the northeast. She requested that this information be furnished to the Bureau for transmittal to appropriate Army officials.

It was apparent that Mrs. MERCHANT is suffering from some mental disorder and it was noticeable that she has droopy. It is not believed that she is reliable and no investigation will be conducted by this office.

CC: El Paso

DES:tm
117-5
Office Memorandum - UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO: MR. D. M. LADD
FROM: MR. H. B. FLETCHER

SUBJECT: MRS. MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT

DATE: November 19, 1948

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

ATTACHED IS A REQUEST FROM THE ARMY AIR FORCES FOR AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE "BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND RELIABILITY" OF THE CAPTIONED SUBJECT.

A REVIEW OF BUREAU FILES REFLECT IN FILE 117-286-1 THAT MR. P. M. JUVENAL, SECURITY OFFICER, TINKER FIELD, OKLAHOMA CITY, ADVISED ON OCTOBER 14, 1947, THAT IN HIS OPINION MRS. MERCHANT WAS PROBABLY A PSYCHOPATHIC CASE.

FILE 62-83894 SERIAL 37 CONTAINS INFORMATION WHEREIN MR. SYDNEY NEWBURGER, CHIEF OF SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE FOR THE AEC AT LOS ALAMOS, STATED OFFICIALS OF THE AEC CONSIDER THE SUBJECT UNRELIABLE AND PROBABLY NOT WELL BALANCED.

IN THE SAME SERIAL, THE EL PASO OFFICE STATED MRS. MERCHANT PERSONALLY APPEARED AT THE OKLAHOMA CITY OFFICE OF THE BUREAU ON OCTOBER 22, 1947, TO REPORT INFORMATION CONCERNING "FLYING DISKS". IT IS STATED:

"IT WAS APPARENT MRS. MERCHANT IS SUFFERING FROM SOME MENTAL DISORDER AND IT WAS NOTICEABLE THAT SHE HAS DROPSY. IT IS NOT BELIEVED THAT SHE IS RELIABLE...."

A CARD IS MAINTAINED IN THE CRIME RECORDS SECTION OF THE BUREAU INDICATING THAT MRS. MERCHANT MAY BE MENTALLY ILL.

ACTION:

IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION, THE ARMY AIR FORCES MAY NOT DESIRE THAT THE INVESTIGATION REQUESTED BE CONDUCTED. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THIS MEMORANDUM BE DIRECTED TO THE LIAISON SECTION AND THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ABOVE BE ORALLY FURNISHED TO THE ARMY AIR FORCES AT WHICH TIME A DETERMINATION SHOULD BE MADE AS TO WHETHER THAT AGENCY STILL DESIRES ANY ACTION TAKEN IN THIS MATTER.
December 9, 1947

EX-4 To: Atomic Energy Commission
Room 38, Public Health Building
Washington, D.C.

Attention: Rear Admiral John E. Gingrich
Director of Security and Intelligence

From: John Edgar Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Subject: MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT

Mr. P. M. Juvenal, Security Officer, Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, has advised the Oklahoma City Office of this Bureau that Mrs. Merchant appeared at Tinker Field on October 14, 1947 and attempted to obtain employment as a Press agent at a reported salary of $7,200.00 a year.

In an interview with Mr. Juvenal, she advised that she had been writing articles on atomic, nuclear, ionic, and ray warfare for the Atomic Energy Commission. She claimed to be in close contact with scientists at Los Alamos and stated that her divorced husband, Benson Merchant, was one of the original engineers at that facility. Mr. Juvenal advised that Mrs. Merchant did not give any information which could be construed as confidential, but claimed to have written articles under her maiden name, Madeleine Gwynne, on various theories and that these articles had met with wide acclaim. Mr. Juvenal was of the opinion that Mrs. Merchant was probably a psychopathic case.

The files of this Bureau reflect that Mrs. Merchant contacted the El Paso Office and advised that she had received several reports concerning light objects seen at night and followed by explosions. She claimed to be a student of radio waves and reportedly discussed flying objects with officials of the Atomic Energy Commission at Los Alamos, including Mr. Sidney Newberger. She also claimed to have written the Secretary of War and other Government officials concerning her theories. The El Paso Office has advised that officials of the Commission at Los Alamos consider Mrs. Merchant to be unreliable and possibly not well balanced mentally. (See 117-146-1)

This is being furnished for your information.
Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Director, FBI
FROM : SAC, Oklahoma City

DATE : October 28, 1949

SUBJECT: MADELINE GWYNNE MERCHANT
ATOMIC ENERGY ACT

Remylet 11/19/47.

By letter dated 11/25/47 the Butte office forwarded to this office the original and a carbon copy of questionnaire received by WILLIAM D. TALLEY, Canyon County Coroner, Nampa, Idaho, on November 20, 1947, apparently from the above captioned individual, who gave her address as 918 N.E. 18th St., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Enclosed herewith is the carbon copy of the questionnaire, and this office is in possession of the original.

The Butte office in their letter of November 25, 1947, advised that an explosion caused by butane gas leakage occurred at Nampa, Idaho, on November 15, 1947. Five persons were killed, 50 were injured, and three buildings were demolished as a result of the explosion. Mrs. FAY DORR, a waitress in the Canyon Cafe, across the street from the explosion, reported to the newspapers that she thought she had seen "a ball of fire" at the time of the explosion. Mr. TALLEY advised the Butte office that he had interviewed Mrs. DORR relative to the "ball of fire" and that it was concluded that Mrs. DORR had seen the reflection of the blast in a window of the Canyon Cafe.

The Butte office requested the Oklahoma City office to ascertain from Mrs. MERCHANT her reason for desiring information regarding the "ball of fire" and why she requested this information be sent to the FBI Agent at Santa Fe, New Mexico. By letter dated December 29, 1947, this office forwarded to the Butte office the information contained in referenced letter to the Bureau, and no investigation was conducted by this office since it appeared Mrs. MERCHANT was not reliable and was possibly suffering from some mental disability.

The Butte office by letter dated October 7, 1949, advises they had received correspondence from the above captioned on July 25, 1949, in which she desired information be furnished the nearest Military Security Office in that area in regard to seven V-shaped objects that were sighted over the Mountain Home Desert, which is near Boise, Idaho, on July 24, 1949, by an unidentified pilot. The Butte office advised MERCHANT claimed she had received this information in the Daily Oklahoma newspaper dated July 25, 1949.

Enclosed with Subject's letter was a "data sheet" containing 18 questions which pertained to V-shaped objects, and according to the Butte letter, these questions were very similar to the data desired by Air Force Intelligence Offices in regard to flying saucers, discs and other similar flying objects. The Butte office has advised Subject desired no acknowledgment to her correspondence, but requested the completed questionnaire be forwarded to appropriate military security authorities. The Butte office has advised this information was furnished Army Security Office, Butte (65-0-206)

RECORDED 130 117 286 -3
INDEXED 130 EX-3
12 OCT 31 1949
On October 3, 1949, the Butte office received correspondence from the Inspector General, AAF, 15th District, OSI, Great Falls Air Force Base, Great Falls, Montana. Enclosed with this correspondence to the Butte office was a letter from the OSI, USAF, which advised that Subject associates with known Communists, and is considered dangerous, and further that Subject's letter was being forwarded to the Air Material Section for evaluation. The Butte office requested the Oklahoma City office to obtain all information in possession of the Headquarters Office, OSI, at Washington, D.C., concerning Subject's association with known Communists.

The Oklahoma City office has no information concerning Subject not already provided to the Bureau in referenced letter, except that one Mrs. MADELINE GWINNE MERCHANT, by letter to this office dated August 2, 1948, advised she had attended Oklahoma University in the Spring of 1935, at which time she had attended lectures given by one Dr. Eaton (possibly identical with HOWARD O. EATON, Professor of Philosophy.) Subject stated she was suspicious of Dr. Eaton since he had recommended her as his student, that she give serious consideration to Socialist or State ownership of all property. She advised that he also suggested that such a change in concepts might be effected by legislation, and should that not be effective, "mild force" or "mild revolution" might have to occur.

The files of this office reflect Howard Eaton was Faculty Adviser of the Equal Education Committee at the University of Oklahoma, which, according to informants, is controlled by Communist Party members.

In view of the above, the Bureau is requested to obtain from the Headquarters of OSI any information they have concerning Subject and/or her association with known Communists. No investigation will be conducted by this office inasmuch as it appears from information in the file that she is mentally unbalanced.
Director, FBI

SAC, Oklahoma City

MADELINE CYNNE MERCHANT
ATOMIC ENERGY ACT

Remylot 11/18/47.

October 28, 1949

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE LOST BY GCM09 RAB!TON

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The Butte office in their letter of November 25, 1947, advised that an explosion caused by butane gas leakage occurred at Nampa, Idaho, on November 15, 1947. Five persons were killed, 50 were injured, and three buildings were demolished as a result of the explosion. Mrs. FAY DORR, a waitress in the Canyon Cafe, across the street from the explosion, reported to the newspapers that she thought she had seen "a ball of fire" at the time of the explosion. Mr. TALLEY advised the Butte office that he had interviewed Mrs. DORR relative to the "ball of fire" and that it was concluded that Mrs. DORR had seen the reflection of the blast in a window of the Canyon Cafe.

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c/o Butte (65-0-206)

WHS FM
117-3
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The Oklahoma City office has no information concerning Subject not already provided to the Bureau in referenced letter, except that one Mrs. MADALINE GYMNE MERCHANT, by letter to this office dated August 2, 1948, advised she had attended Oklahoma University in the Spring of 1935, at which time she had attended lectures given by one Dr. EATON, Professor of Philosophy. Subject stated she was suspicious of Dr. EATON since he had recommended to her as his student, that she give serious consideration to Socialist or State ownership of all property. She advised that he also suggested that such a change in concepts might be effected by legislation, and should not be effective, "mild force" or "mild revolution" might have to occur.

The files of this office reflect HOWARD O. EATON was Faculty Adviser of the Equal Education Committee at the University of Oklahoma, which, according to informants, is controlled by Communist Party members.

In view of the above, the Bureau is requested to obtain from the Headquarters of OSI any information they have concerning Subject and/or her association with known Communists. No investigation will be conducted by this office inasmuch as it appears from information in the file that she is mentally unbalanced.
Mr. William D. Talley,
Canyon County Coroner,
Nampa, Idaho.

Dear Sir:

Will you kindly answer the following questions concerning the "ball-of-fire" described in a news release as seen by Mrs. Fay Dorr and others on Sunday, Nov. 16, 1947?

1. Was the reported number of persons killed (five) correct?

2. Of the fifty persons reported injured, how many are seriously injured?

3. Are the injured suffering from burns similar to lightning burns?

4. Direction from which "ball-of-fire" came.

5. Size, (as accurate as possible)

6. Was it seen by others before it entered the cafe kitchen?

7. Did it explode?

8. Color

9. Exact hour of occurrence

10. Shape of object

11. Remarks:

12. What was the state of the weather?

On a separate sheet of paper, please give any other unusual impressions of those seeing the "ball-of-fire."

Thanking you very kindly for your earliest possible reply, I am,

Sincerely,

NW#: 58950
DocId: 34278200
cc/ The carbon copy enclosed should be mailed to Mr. Francis Finley, FBI Agent-In-Charge.
Federal Building, Santa Fe, N.M.

F.S.: This communication should not be discussed any more than absolutely necessary to secure the desired details; except with members of the FBI or official members of the War DeP't.

Additional remarks:

Use space below if necessary:
SMC, Oklahoma City

Director, FBI

SUBJECT: OTIS MERCHANT

ATOMIC ENERGY ACT
Bureau File 137-286

Resolution dated October 28, 1949, in which you requested that the Bureau obtain from the Headquarters of the Office of Special Investigations any information that they may have concerning the subject and/or her association with known Communists.

Bureau files reflect that O.S.I. requested an investigation concerning the background, objectives and reliability of the subject in November, 1949. This request was withdrawn on December 22, 1949, in view of the information indicating that the subject was suffering from a mental disorder.

In view of the background of this subject, no inquiry will be made by the Bureau as requested in your request.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE REVIEWED BY: W.S. CRABTREE
E.H.

Mailed 11

52 NOV 22 1949

Cargo

NW#: 58950 DocId: 34278200