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“THE FIRST ‘SPACE AGE,’ CA. 1850-1915—A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE EARLIEST KNOWN  
APPEARANCES OF SPACEFLIGHT IN POPULAR CULTURE AND SCIENCE, PART 2

**Abstract**

This paper is Part 2 of our joint 2022 IAC history paper “The First ‘Space Age,’ ca. 1850-1915—A Re-Examination of the Earliest Known Appearances of Spaceflight in Popular Culture and Science.”

As with Part 1 of our joint paper that covered the role of science fiction, this part will continue to show, based upon a closer examination of previously overlooked historical materials including digitized early newspapers and magazine articles, that roughly from the mid-1800s to the pre-World War I period—which, for convenience sake we date to ca. 1850-1915—there was a noticeable and far more significant rise in both public and scientific interest in the topic of the possibility of flight into space than has been previously realized.

In this paper, we will focus upon the earliest known appearances of the spaceflight theme in films, plays, music, simulated space flight rides for mass audiences, and other areas of popular culture of the ca. 1850-1915 period. We will therefore add to our argument that there existed a hitherto unknown “First Space Age” when mankind first became conscious of the basic idea of the possibilities of spaceflight and that these manifestations were international and diverse.

Part 3 of our paper, to be presented at a later IAC, will conclude our study and will cover the earliest known appearances of spaceflight in science, that will include closer examinations of not only the well-known works of pioneers in astronautics like Konstantin E. Tsiolkovsky of Russia and Robert Esnault-Pelterie of France, but several other newly discovered early proponents of the idea of spaceflight of that same period.