

Moon Over Ohio: Residents Claimed Lunar Ownership in 1966

Who really owns the Moon? A group of Geneva, Ohio, residents say they claimed Luna as their own back in 1966. And they have the paperwork to prove it.

GENEVA, OH ([PRWEB](#)) April 30, 2004 -- Donald Miles, 76, of Geneva is certain he has a deed to some land on the moon. He just can't remember where he put it. Dick Whaley, 73, doesn't have a deed, but thanks to his wife Janet's sharp memory, he was able to put his hands on the document in which Geneva laid claim to the lunar landscape 38 years ago.

Miles and Whaley are among the 35 signatories on the Declaration of Lunar Ownership, which was unveiled to the world April 12, 1966, in the auditorium of Geneva High School. More than 200 persons attended the announcement ceremonies.

...the city this morning is awaiting cablegrams of congratulations from throughout the world, noted the Geneva Free Press the following day. As yet, no word has been received from the Soviet Union.

The claim was laid in conjunction with a celebration of the city's 100th anniversary, held in early June. The stunt was the brainchild of the late George Spencer, a furniture store owner who had a knack for marketing.

George was a very innovative guy when it came to advertising, recalls Miles.

Miles says Spencer also organized a militia of bearded men to protect the city's claim to the moon. And Whaley says he recalls the Centennial Committee building a rocket to the moon where the convenience store stands on South Broadway. He witnessed the liftoff.

The smoke poured out of it like it was going to the moon, Whaley says. Everybody gathered around to watch it, but it just sat there and looked silly.

The verbose declaration, largely forgotten by the surviving signatories, declared that The Physical property of the Moon shall belong exclusively to the citizens of Geneva, Ohio, and any act or encroachment upon this claim shall be deemed an unfriendly act upon that lovely little city that is in the know and on the Go, with Ohio and shall be responded to with all human dignity and moral circumspection.

The document also gave the city the right to rent or lease its moon holdings with a two-thirds vote of the city's entire population. And it provided for the sale of 100 deeds for 100 acres each at a price of \$100.

Yes, I remember them selling them, says Miles, but I have no idea how many were sold.

In justifying the city's claim, City Councilman John Haeseler told the citizens that the rays of the Geneva moon were the reason for many of the advantages to living and doing business in Geneva.

His politically incorrect speech argued that Geneva women are more beautiful than women from any other location in the world. The moonbeams mature, soften and perfect their complexions, statures and general loveliness better than any other place on earth.



The moonbeams also were credited for producing superior fruit, mops, rubber products, golf shafts and weather.

The stunt was evidently quickly forgotten and nothing more ever made of the city's bogus claim. Further, in 1967, the United Nations Outer Space Treaty stipulated that no government could own extraterrestrial property. The treaty was not ratified, however.

Had Geneva's committee done its homework, it would have discovered that in February 1952, a Berkley science fiction fan club laid claim to a section of the moon. The following year, a Chilean lawyer, Jenaro Gajardo Vera, claimed ownership and published that claim in three issues of the Chilean official journal.

President Richard Nixon even acknowledged the Chilean claim. In May 1969, Nixon sent a telegram to Vera through a U.S. Embassy representative requesting his authorization for the U.S. astronauts to land on the satellite that belongs to you. However, he apparently didn't bother to get Geneva's permission.

Nor was selling lunar land a new idea. In 1952, Robert R. Coles, former chairman of New York's Hayden Planetarium, incorporated to sell lots on the moon for a buck an acre. Inflation must have been nonexistent from 1955 to 1966.

More recently, many Internet sites offer a piece of the moon for unwary buyers. A United Kingdom seller was offering an acre for under \$15 on eBay. The most prominent of moon-selling sites is Dennis Hope's Lunar Embassy (<http://www.geocities.com/moonsayles>), which claims to have found a loophole in the 1967 United Nations treaty. Hope, who claims to have sold more than 300 million lunar acres since 1980, says he has legal claim because the treaty didn't forbid individuals or corporations from owning the moon.

Inflation has taken its toll, however, from the days when Geneva offered 100 acres for \$100. Hope's lunar landscape starts at \$29.95 an acre.

So, if you were among those who bought 100 acres from Geneva 36 years ago, you might want to dig deep into the safe deposit box or desk drawer, dust off that old piece of paper ... and use it to start a fire in the hearth some moonlit night.

###



Contact Information

Lifestyle Editor

The Star Beacon

<http://www.starbeacon.com/index.asp?MC=PRINT&NID=5&AID=3093>

Online Web 2.0 Version

You can read the online version of this press release [here](#).