

CITY OF TRENTON
NEW JERSEY

PAUL MORTON
CITY MANAGER
M.A.M. Soc. C.E.



RAYMOND F. RICHTER
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
AND
PERSONNEL OFFICER

October 31, 1938

44-3 WAR OF THE WORLDS

Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D. C.

COMPLAINT - WABC BROADCAST

Gentlemen:

To avoid a reoccurrence of a very grave and serious situation that developed in this community last night, due to the public's misinterpretation of the broadcast through WABC at about 8:15, dramatizing H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds", which completely crippled communication facilities of our Police Department for about three hours, I am requesting that you immediately make an investigation and do everything possible to prevent a reoccurrence.

The situation was so acute that two thousand phone calls were received in about two hours, all communication lines were paralyzed and voided normal municipal functions. If we had had a large fire at this time it could have easily caused a more serious situation. Tremendous excitement existed among certain areas of this community and we were receiving constantly long distance phone calls from many states making inquiries of relatives and families thought to have been killed by the catastrophe that was included in the play.

I can conceive of no reason why the name of Trenton and vicinity should have been used on this broadcast. The State Police were equally handicapped and it is indescribable the seriousness of this situation.

Your prompt attention will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

PAUL MORTON
CITY MANAGER

PM/mlw

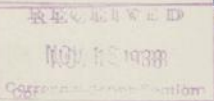
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Invasion From Mars on Radio Terrifies Listeners Over U. S.

H. G. Wells's Book and Orson Welles's Acting Bring Prayers, Tears, Flight and the Police

Parts of two states at least were thrown into disturbance last night by the broadcast of a play by WABC between 8 and 9 o'clock, the dramatic effect leading to reports that a meteor had crashed near Trenton, N. J., killing many persons.

The play was an adaptation of H. G. Wells's story, "The War of the Worlds." It was put on by Orson Welles and had been localized in New Jersey. In Mr. Wells's story the space ship from Mars landed in Wales and the invaders began at once to lay waste the countryside.

In the Orson Welles version the space ship, thought by many to be a meteor, landed near Trenton, and its occupants at once brought weapons of fabulous power to bear on the State of New Jersey. The story was presented in highly dramatic style, with the station announcer giving the news and turning over the facilities of the station to the New Jersey National Guard. A "major of the National Guard" gave the details of the horror in clipped sentences.

It soon became apparent on both sides of the Hudson River that thousands of persons had stumbled upon the program a little late, with-



Orson Welles

out knowing what they were getting into. Some tuned in just in time to get the vivid impression of a great disaster, with the National Guard taking charge and an enemy within the borders of New Jersey.

For months these same persons had subsisted upon headlines and radio broadcasts dwelling upon the imminent horrors of war in Europe and they seemed to be in a mood

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