

The Any-Idiot Artifact

What does it take to end the mystery of Amelia Earhart's disappearance? That, of course, depends upon who you're trying to convince. The complex body of independent, yet mutually supportive, archival and physical evidence TIGHAR has already assembled has proven sufficient to persuade almost anyone who takes the time and trouble to become familiar with our work. If our only goal was to satisfy our own curiosity, or to convince the academic community, we could stop now. Artifacts such as the dado clearly meet the "preponderance of the evidence" standard set for cases in civil law, and even the "beyond reasonable doubt" standard of criminal law. So why go back?

We've always acknowledged that, in a strictly historical sense, it really doesn't much matter what happened to Amelia Earhart. Had she completed her flight the world today would not be noticeably different. But if Earhart's disappearance seems to have meant little to history, it's also clear that her loss meant, and still means, a great deal to a great many people. It is the public, not the scholars, who ask what really happened to Amelia Earhart. Any meaningful answer must, therefore, satisfy a general public which has little interest and less time for academic solutions to anything. If we are really going to alter sixty years of public perception about what happened to Amelia Earhart we'll have to come up with something that is instantly and intuitively conclusive. Whether it is a pair of Pratt & Whitney R1340 S3H1 Wasps (serial numbers 6149 and 6150), or Pioneer Bubble Octant serial number 12-36, or any of the unique features of NR16020 which can be directly matched to historical photographs, the physical object will have to qualify as what we have come to call the Any-Idiot Artifact.

Is there reason to think that such an object still exists on Nikumaroro after nearly sixty years? Yes. If we discover and recover it, will **everyone** accept it as proof? Probably not. But if most reasonable people are satisfied that TIGHAR has solved the mystery, that should be enough.