

Robert Goddard - Part I

Lead: On October 19, 1899 a teenager in Worcester, Massachusetts climbed up to trim dead branches from a cherry tree. While suspended above the meadow he began to dream of building a device to escape the earth and travel to Mars.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Robert Hutchings Goddard spent his adult years giving life to that dream. He grew up in the Boston suburbs, the child of a

prosperous manufacturer who encouraged his son's scientific curiosity. Goddard excelled in basic science courses and physics. While at the university, he published an article in *Scientific American* on the use of the gyroscope in the steering of airplanes. As a graduate student at Clark University and Princeton, he speculated on many variations of space flight, including the use of solar and atomic propulsion and even conceived an early version of multi-staged rockets.

Plagued by ill-health during most of his teenaged years Goddard nearly succumbed to tuberculosis in 1913, but while recovering he prepared the patents for most of the elementary

features of the rockets that would one day send astronauts to the moon and space probes to the farthest reaches of the solar system. During World War II, he did contract work for the U.S. Signal Corps where he and his team developed a lightweight hand-held tube-launched rocket which in World War II became the bazooka.

With grants from the Smithsonian Institution he worked first with solid fuel rockets and then in the 1920s with the more powerful liquid fuel devices that made his reputation. On March 16, 1926, near a cabbage patch on Effie Ward's farm in Auburn, Massachusetts, Robert Goddard flew the world's first liquid fueled rocket to a height of 41 feet. Next time:

Goddard, Lindbergh and the German V-2.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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Resources

Kernan, Michael. "Anniversary of Goddard's first Step Toward Space," *Smithsonian* 6 (12, March, 1976): 77-81.

Wohleber, Curt. "The Rocket Man," *American Heritage of Invention and Technology* 12 (1, Summer 1996): 36-45.