

PROJECT 10073 RECORD

<b>1. DATE - TIME GROUP</b> Aug or Sep 49	<b>2. LOCATION</b> Oak Park
<b>3. SOURCE</b> Civilian	<b>10. CONCLUSION</b> INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR EVALUATION
<b>4. NUMBER OF OBJECTS</b> ONE	
<b>5. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION</b> Not Reported	<b>11. BRIEF SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS</b> Observer sighted an object flying over his house at 11 minute intervals. The object was flying NNW and flashing. Its color was bluish-white.
<b>6. TYPE OF OBSERVATION</b> Ground-Visual	
<b>7. COURSE</b> ---	
<b>8. PHOTOS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
<b>9. PHYSICAL EVIDENCE</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	



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# Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : MCIAXA-1, Mr. Rodgers

FROM : MCIAXA

SUBJECT: Incident - Unidentified Object

2 JHZ/gjm  
DATE: 27 March 1950

1. The following information is given as another report of an incident which occurred between 8 P. M. and 11 P. M. in August or September 1949.

2. Mr. ██████████, Building ██████████ I, reported that an unidentified object appeared over his house at Oak Park on Watervaleit Avenue and appeared every 11 minutes and that he timed five of these intervals. The object appeared to be 10° north of the elliptic circle flying north, northwest. Five flashes occurred during the time of passing over the house. The color of the object was bluish white, somewhat of the appearance of a "lightning bug". The object appeared to be quite high.

3. This report should be filed with other such reports being held in the Performance & Characteristics Branch for future reference.

A. J. HEMSTREET, JR.  
Lt Colonel, USAF  
Chief, Aircraft & Propulsion Sec  
Technical Analysis Division  
Intelligence Department

*file*  
*Ins 0312*

ANALYSIS DIVISION FILE	
FILE NUMBER	
INITIALS	DATE

UNCLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED

*XWU*  
*not under*  
*498.1*

7-3710-23



### The Tombaugh Rectangles

A remarkable phenomenon observed in New Mexico in the summer of 1949 has remained among the most puzzling of the Unknowns. As in the Chesapeake Bay case, the facts are not in dispute. The witness was an astronomer, Clyde Tombaugh, at that time in charge of the optical instrumentation of the rocket-firing program at the White Sands Missile Range. He had thousands of hours of experience in observing the night sky and when still a student, had gained fame after months of patient searching of photographic plates, by locating the image of the planet Pluto near the position long predicted for it by Lowell and Pickering.

On the night of August 20 Tombaugh was sitting with his wife and his mother-in-law in the yard of his home in Las Cruces, watching the stars. There was no moon, and the transparency of the sky was extraordinary, so that even the stars of sixth magnitude, usually barely detectable by the naked eye, were clearly visible. About 10:45 P.M. a geometrically spaced group of six to eight rectangles of light appeared almost directly overhead. Of low luminosity, they were "windowlike" in appearance and yellowish-green in color. The individual rectangles were quite small, not wider than four or five minutes of arc, and the entire group covered a span of about 1 degree (about twice that of the full moon). As they moved noiselessly in a vertical circle path toward the south-southeast, the individual rectangles became foreshortened, the span of the group became smaller, the lights turned brownish and faded from view some 35 to 40 degrees above the horizon. They had been in sight for about three seconds. Mrs. Tombaugh, who did not see the lights until they had moved some distance from the zenith, observed them for only about 1½ seconds before they disappeared. To her they seemed a diffuse greenish glow, interconnecting a span of greenish spots of light. Her eyesight had always been less acute than that of her husband, and they attributed the difference in their descriptions to this difference in vision.

Although Tombaugh had been too startled to count the number of rectangles or to note some other features he wondered about later, he immediately recorded the facts of the observation, sketched the pattern of the formation, and noted his impression that the lights had been part of a rigid structure. He added, "I have done thousands of hours of night sky watching, but never saw a sight so strange as this." A report of this sighting was forwarded to Air Force officials, who could find no explanation. UFO enthusiasts unhesitatingly pronounced the phenomenon a huge flying saucer—an interpretation that the witness himself never made.

The accounts given to the public unfortunately suffer from various distortions of fact. In its Cassandra-like warning of possible visitors from other planets, *Life Magazine* included the Tombaugh sighting as one of the key cases and in a ten-sentence description managed to include at least six misstatements, some of which added to the "uncanny" nature of the incident. According to this summary [11] the year was 1948 (it was 1949); the time was about 11:00 P.M. (it was 10:45 P.M.); the lights were traveling south to north (they were moving northwest to southeast); the object had an oval shape (Tombaugh did not specify a shape); the lights exhibited a glare (they were of low luminosity); their speed was too fast for a plane, too slow for a meteor (no estimate of speed was given). On a nationwide TV show broadcast in 1958 the director of NICAP stated specifically that Tombaugh had observed a cigar-shaped object with lighted portholes [12]. An "artist's conception" of the UFO in one publication [13] depicts a long, tapered ship with a line of lighted windows, wholly unrelated to Tombaugh's own sketch, which shows no unifying structure, merely six small rectangles arranged as though each one were at the corner of a hexagon (see Figure 18).

1-5712-23



## Galley 99—THE WORLD OF FLYING SAUCERS

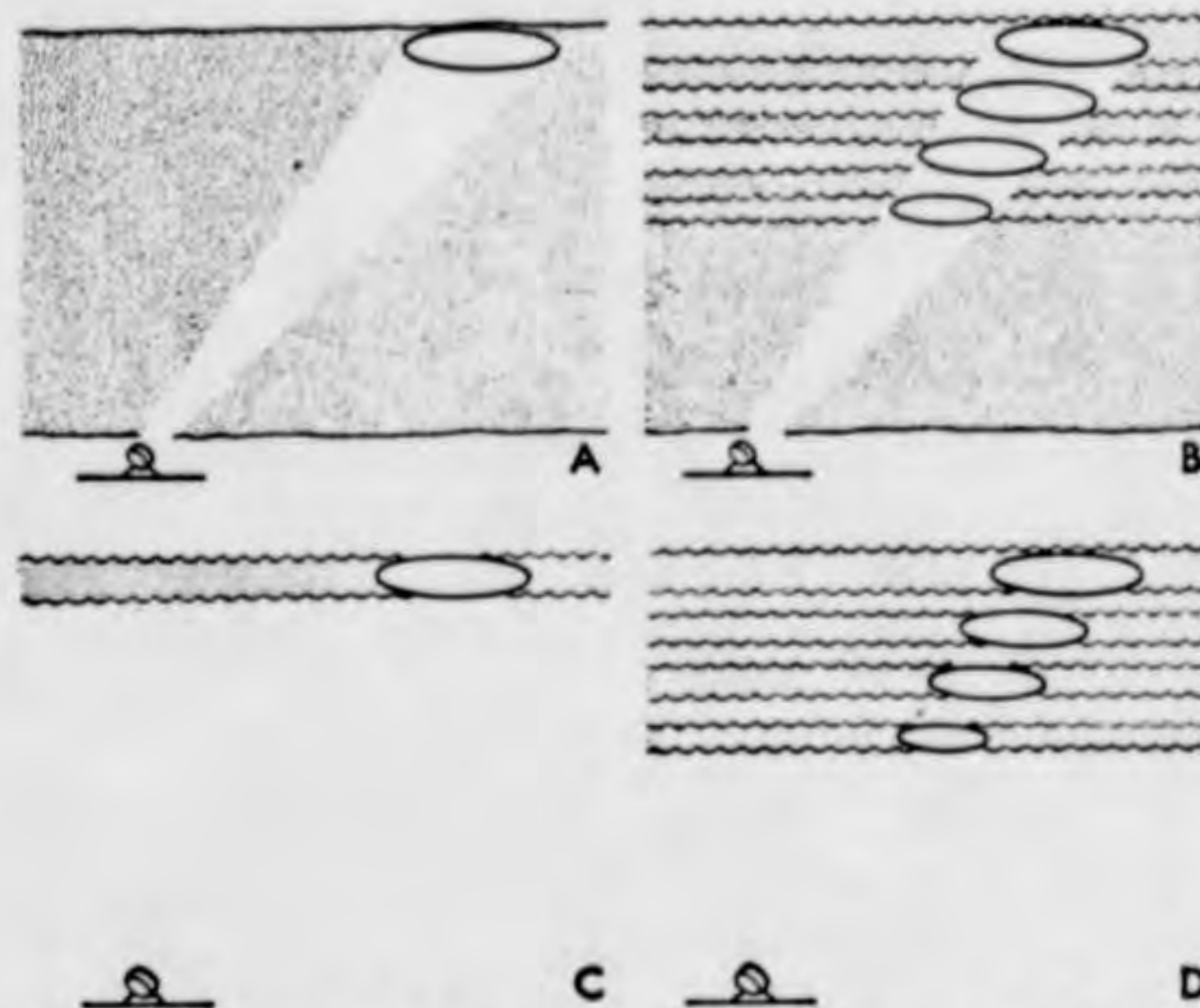


Figure 18. Searchlight shining on clouds. (A) through slightly foggy or dusty atmosphere, light cone plainly visible; (B) through multiple thin cloud layers and foggy or dusty atmosphere; (C) on cloud layer through clear atmosphere, no light cone visible; (D) on multiple thin cloud layers, no light cone visible.

While keeping an open mind on the possibility of interplanetary travel, Tombaugh himself has never supported the spaceship interpretation so often attributed to him in print but has considered various possible explanations—insects or birds illuminated by ground lights, or reflections of ground lights against the boundary of an inversion layer in the air. Of these, the inversion theory seems the most probable. The layer in such a case must have been extremely thin or extremely weak, otherwise it would have dimmed the brightness of the faint stars he was observing. As in the Chesapeake Bay case, the mysterious rectangles were undoubtedly the special effect of some unique combination of circumstances, unlikely to be repeated. Conditions were ideal for the formation of small sharply localized inversions: the weather was clear, the day had been hot. A small temperature inversion existing at a relatively low elevation and smoke, haze, or dust collecting in a very thin layer at a relatively low altitude were the prerequisites that almost certainly existed. Some unknown cause—in the vicinity of an airfield there are many possibilities—could have produced a ripple in the thin haze layer. This ripple, tipping the haze layer at a slight angle, could have reflected the lighted windows of a house; as the ripple progressed in a wavelike motion along the layer, the reflection would have moved as did the rectangles of light. Conditions of refraction at the interface would have reflected the wave upward.

Tombaugh has recently summarized his convictions on the entire UFO phenomena as well as on his own sighting:

"From my own studies of the solar system I cannot entertain any serious possibility for intelligent life on the other planets, not even for Mars (the planet to which I have devoted considerable observation and study over the past thirty-five years). The logistics of visitations from planets revolving around the nearer stars is staggering. In consideration of the hundreds of millions of years in the geologic time scale when such visitations may possibly have occurred, the odds of a single visit in a given century or millennium are overwhelmingly against such an event.

"A much more likely source of explanation is some natural optical phenomenon in our own atmosphere. In my 1949 sighting the faintness of the object, together with the manner of fading in intensity as it traveled away from zenith towards the southeastern horizon, is quite suggestive of a reflection from an optical boundary or surface of slight contrast in refractive index, as in an inversion layer.

"I have never seen anything like it before or since, and I have spent a lot of time where the night sky could be seen well. This suggests that the phenomenon involves a comparatively rare set of conditions or circumstances to produce it, but nothing like the



[1949]

1 - 30 SEPTEMBER SIGHTINGS

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>EVALUATION</u>
Grand Rapids, Michigan (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	Astro (METEOR)
Knoxville, Tennessee	[REDACTED]	AIRCRAFT
Alexandria, Louisiana	[REDACTED]	Astro (METEOR)
Lebec, California	Military (PHOTOS)	1. BALLOON 2. Other (MISINTERPRE- TATION OF CONVENTIONAL OBJECTS)
East of Reno, Nevada (Mountain Home AFB, Idaho)	Military	AIRCRAFT
Clark AFB, Philippines	Military	Other (CONTRAILS)
Goose Bay, Labrador	Pilot	Astro (METEORS)
Boston, New York (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	
West Paris, Maine (NO CARDS)	Military	Probable AIRCRAFT
Lubbock, Texas (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	Probable Other (DUCKS)
Savannah, Georgia (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	Probable AIRCRAFT
Scottsbluff, Nebraska (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	
Scottsbluff, Nebraska (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	
14.45 - 120.22E (Japan) (NO CARDS)	Military	
32.05N - 106.50W (Las Cruces, New Mexico (NO CARDS)	Military	
Griffis AFB, Rome New York (NO CARDS)	Military	
Hooksett, New Hampshire (NO CARDS)	Military	
Winchendon, Mass. (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	
Lexington, Nebraska (NO CARDS) (M)	[REDACTED]	
Enid, Oklahoma (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	
Humboldt, Nebraska (NO CARDS)	[REDACTED]	
35.07N - 138.52E (Japan) (NO CARDS)	Military	
Camp Holabird, Maryland (NO CARDS)	Military	
Honolulu, Hawaii (NO CARDS)	Military	

ADDITIONAL REPORTED SIGHTINGS (NOT CASES)

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SOURCES</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>
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CASE MISSING



COORDINATION  
OR DEP CG

ATSC Form No 10-508  
(Rev. Oct 15)

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INITIALS IN APPRO-  
PRIATE BLOCK)

UNCLASSIFIED

ADJUTANT GENERAL

**MCIXAXA**  
CHIEF OF ADMIN.

HWS/ed

AIR INSPECTOR

19 JAN 1950

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Mr. [REDACTED]  
1470 University Terrace  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Dear Sir:

PERSONNEL (T-1)

Receipt of your letter, dated 11 January 1950, is  
acknowledged.

You may be assured the information you provided  
will be given proper consideration.

Your action in writing this Command is appreciated.

Yours truly,

INTELLIGENCE (T-2)

*with MA 6572  
60 374  
Mellen  
McIXAXA  
Kunstroff-McIXAXA*

**B W F**

BRUNO W. FEILING  
Colonel, USAF  
Chief, Tech Analysis Division  
Intelligence Department

ENGINEERING (T-3)

SUPPLY (T-4)

PLANS (T-5)

BASE C. O.

ANALYSIS DIVISION FILE	
<i>Proj 10003</i>	
FILE NUMBER	
<i>H</i>	<i>100</i>
INITIALS	DATE

UNCLASSIFIED

OTHER



Sept 1  
Summer 49 UNCLASSIFIED

Jan. 11, 1950

Refer to MCIAXA-1

UIC

Director  
Aerospace Studies Inst  
ATTN: Archives  
Maxwell  
RETURN TO  
K 243-6012-1  
Sep 1949

Dear Sir,

With regard to your letter of Jan 10, 1950, I should like to give an account of two strange observations.

The first occurred in 1944, and I probably have information on it already. It was in the spring or early summer. I was in the army at Camp Breckinridge, Ky., when at least fifty of us soldiers observed in the sky overhead, a dirigible shaped wingless aircraft, silvery and metallic, (rocket shaped) flying north at high speed (about 800 mph) It was noon. The Chicago Tribune carried two articles that week about reports of the craft. It seemed to have come from the direction of Tennessee, thru Kentucky, Illinois and was last seen heading out over Lake Michigan.

1  
Sep 1949

The other was this summer Sept. 1, 10 p.m. on U.S. 16 10 miles west of Grand Rapids, in the sky to the South. My wife and I sighted momentarily in the sky a sudden flash of light and a red and green cone of flames shooting across the sky. There are no airports, searchlights, and there were no planes in the vicinity. The trail of flame seemed to be from far out in space, and originated near the moon which was high in the sky at this time.

I have heard many reports of saucers and green cones of flame as seen by many of my friends, who were very serious and reliable in their reports.

Two weeks ago the report came over the radio that a craft of the type I mention in my first paragraph had been seen flying across Alaska at speeds faster than credited to any of our planes. This news never got any further.

I am glad to be of service whenever possible in the investigation of these phenomena which have intrigued me.

Sincerely yours,

[Redacted signature]

Ann Arbor, Michigan

SMS

1003315

7-3112-24

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