

Detecting UFOs in the 1950s

The original SETI program (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) was set-up by Canadian Department of Communications engineer and scientist Wilbert Brockhouse Smith in 1953. The main difference? Smith was not looking at distant stars, he was looking a lot closer to home - like the skies over Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

The Canadian government was quite concerned about flying saucer UFOs over Canadian skies at the time, so Wilbert Smith designed instruments that would detect when a UFO flew over. He set up a UFO detection station at Shirley Bay ten miles outside Ottawa, Ontario.

Based on the idea that the UFOs operate by manipulating gravity, Smith's equipment was set-up to detect and record changes in the gravity field. The device was also connected to an alarm should some exotic technology manage to change the gravity field over Shirley Bay.

On Sunday, August 8, 1954 the station detected something in the skies. Wilbert ran outside, but the sky was overcast, so he could not see what sort of aerial phenomena or UFO had altered the gravity in the area.

Immediately after Smith announced the detection to the press, he was heavily reprimanded. Within days he reversed himself in the press and said no UFO was detected. By the end of the month the government told the press that it had not only shut-down the detection station, but all UFO research including Project Magnet.

It's interesting to read between the lines of the press release of August 10, 1954 that states, while the government is officially out of the UFO business, they still want people to forward their UFO information to Wilbert on an "unofficial" basis. They even go to the point of including his mailing address in the press release. So while they wanted the press off their backs regarding the UFO issue, it's obvious they were still interested in studying UFOs.

Based on the intense government interest in solving the UFO problem at the time, it's most likely that UFO projects went top-secret from this point on. Some of it may have been taken out of the hands of Smith, who had the problematic tendency of sharing his UFO findings with the

Shirley Bay Lookout Station Outside Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

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press, who would then descend on his superiors.