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Incident #23 -- Idaho -- 24 June 1947

Any probable astronomical explanation for this incident is dependent upon the hour of observation, which is not stated in the information given with the summary.

An unconfirmed statement (by Mr. Marchan, quoted in material submitted relative to incident #101) that the observation was made at 3:30 P. M. allows for no possible astronomical explanation other than that a persistent meteor train may have been observed. Such a phenomenon might have given the general impression suggested by the limited description of the incident.

If, however, the observation occurred during the early evening hours, shortly after sunset, which occurred that day at about 8:00 P. M. local time, then it is extremely likely that Lt. Gov. Whitehead saw either the planet Saturn or Mercury. Mercury set almost exactly an hour after the sun and was of stellar magnitude +1. Saturn, of magnitude +0.6 and hence about once again as bright as Mercury, set two hours after the sun. A bright planet shining through thin cirrus clouds could give the impression of a "comet-like object."

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