

**PROJECT
BLUE BOOK**
CROP CIRCLE CASE FILES

NO FILE #
VEBLEN TOWNSHIP, SOUTH DAKOTA
AUGUST 11, 1965

COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY:
JEFFREY WILSON, DIRECTOR ICCRA
INDEPENDENT CROP CIRCLE RESEARCHERS' ASSOCIATION

WWW.ICCRA.ORG

NO FILE #
VEBLEN TOWNSHIP, SOUTH DAKOTA
AUGUST 11, 1965

On June 18, 2015 Aaron Clark of the *Cleveland Ufology Project (CUP)* posted a link on the CUP *Facebook* page to a news story from *Open Minds* about Rob Mercer, who runs the *Miami Valley UFO Society*. For those unfamiliar with Rob Mercer's story, he ran across an ad on *Craigslist* that was selling old (original) USAF Project Blue Book file documents. Rob was able to track down the original owner, who turned out to be an officer that had been assigned to Project Blue Book who kept a lot of the original files after the Project was shut down. He gave Rob the additional boxes of files that he still had in his possession. What interested me, and what piqued my curiosity to seek Rob out, was that the news article photo showed a stack of photo slides.

Several years ago, I had worked on a historical crop circle case from 1964 at Dale, Indiana in which Project Blue Book had contracted a physicist from Northwestern University by the name of William Powers to conduct an investigation of an eyewitness to a ball-of-light (BOL) that created a swirled circle in grass. Today, in the online Project Blue Book files on the Dale, Indiana case, you can see a photocopied page of a dozen or so slides which are all blacked out. I wondered if perhaps Rob had gotten his hands on any of the original Dale, Indiana case slides that might have photos of the swirled grass circle. Unfortunately, Rob didn't have any photos from Dale, but he did have two slides of two people crouched down in front of a swirled-down circle of *wheat*.

I had recognized at least part of the photos – and I say only part of the photos, because the photos I had seen in the online Project Blue Book files were heavily redacted. The photos I recalled seeing were included in a file under case #9835B – Mount Airy, North Carolina – an event which also reportedly included a swirled *grass* circle on the date of August 19, 1965.

A further search of the online Project Blue Book archives that I did turned up something even more interesting – the wheat circle photos weren't from Mt. Airy, North Carolina at all, but were actually from Veblen Township, South Dakota, and one of the photos appeared on the front page of a local newspaper accompanied by a short article which told a very interesting story. Project Blue Book officials were notified of the South Dakota event, but eventually declined to investigate it and no case number was ever assigned. What I've compiled on the following pages tells an interesting story of what I have been able to piece together so far of this early USA crop circle report.

JEFFREY WILSON
JUNE 29, 2015



One of two high-resolution scanned slides from the Rob Mercer-recovered Project Blue Book files (numbered V67-739). Pictured are farmer Willard Hill (right), Chip the terrier (center), and Marshall County Extension Agent Richard Durland (left) examining one of the *twenty-seven* swirled circles in wheat found on the Hill farm in Veblen Township, South Dakota on August 11, 1965. Although the extension agent Richard Durland contacted the Air Force to see if they could provide an explanation, Project Blue Book officials declined to investigate, and no case number was ever assigned. Later, photos of this South Dakota event were mis-labeled and filed by Project Blue Book investigators under case #9835B – Mount Airy, North Carolina – an event which also included a reported swirled grass circle on the date of August 19, 1965. Oddly, when the Project Blue Book files were released to the public, photos of the South Dakota event were heavily redacted under the Mount Airy case file #, but all the non-case file photos and documents were not redacted and appear in the archives as “Illegible”. The two slides that appear in the recovered Project Blue Book files appear to be press photos – this one of the two is on the front page of *The Journal* (Britton, Marshall County, South Dakota) newspaper in the Volume 82, Thursday, August 19, 1965 edition, dated before the Air Force was even notified of the event.



One of two high-resolution scanned slides from recovered Project Blue Book files (numbered V67-734). Pictured are farmer Willard Hill (left), Marshall County Extension Agent Richard Durland (right), and Chip the terrier (far right) examining one of the *twenty-seven* swirled wheat circles found on the Hill farm in Veblen Township, South Dakota on August 11, 1965. Although the extension agent Richard Durland contacted the Air Force to see if they could provide an explanation, Project Blue Book officials declined to investigate, and no case number was ever assigned. Later, photos of this South Dakota event were mis-labeled and filed by Project Blue Book investigators under case #9835B – Mount Airy, North Carolina – an event which also included a reported swirled grass circle on the same exact date of August 19, 1965. Oddly, when the Project Blue Book files were released to the public, photos of the South Dakota event were heavily redacted under the Mount Airy case file #, but all the non-case file photos and documents were not redacted and appear in the archives as “Illegible”. The two slides that appear in the recovered Project Blue Book files appear to be press photos – one of the two is on the front page of The Journal (Britton, Marshall County, South Dakota) newspaper in the Volume 82, Thursday, August 19, 1965 edition, dated before the Air Force was even notified of the event.

Official letter from Marshall County extension agent Richard Durland to the United States Air Force base in Fargo, North Dakota dated August 31, 1965. Durland has "no logical explanation" for the circles found.



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
AGRICULTURE • 4-H • HOME ECONOMICS

South Dakota State College, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and County Cooperating

MARSHALL COUNTY TREPTON, SOUTH DAKOTA PHONE HI 8-5171

August 31, 1965

Commanding Officer
U. S. Air Force Base
Fargo, North Dakota

Dear Sir:

Several people in this county, and especially in the
Northwestern part of this County are quite concerned about
the areas described in the enclosed clipping.

No logical explanation can describe the numerous areas
found in this field.

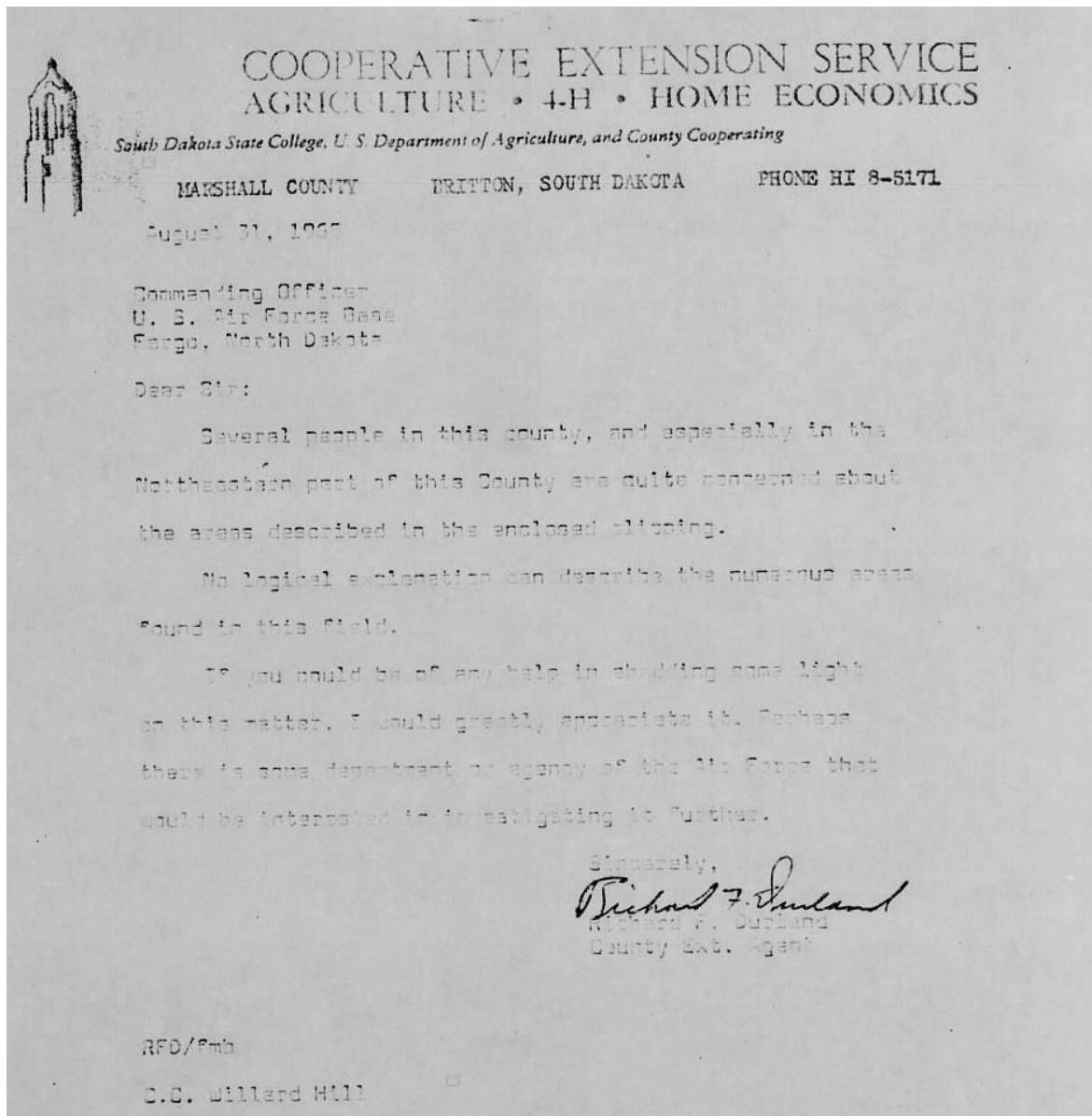
If you could be of any help in studying some light
on this matter, I would greatly appreciate it. Perhaps
there is some department or agency of the Air Force that
could be interested in investigating it further.

Sincerely,
Richard F. Durland
Richard F. Durland
County Ext. Agent

RFD/pmb

D.E. Willard H111

(High contrast enhanced, inset) Official letter from Marshall County extension agent Richard Durland to the United States Air Force base in Fargo, North Dakota dated August 31, 1965. Durland has “no logical explanation” for the circles found.



(inset)

Official letter from Brigadier General Homer G. Gobel, Base Detachment Commander of the North Dakota Air National Guard dated September 3, 1965 to the Air Force's Foreign Technology Division (operating Project Blue Book) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Gobel includes Richard Durland's original correspondence, and offers that it might be of interest to them because of "recent reports of UFO sightings in this area".

HEADQUARTERS
BASE DETACHMENT
NORTH DAKOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Box ~~155~~⁵³⁶ State University Station
Fargo, North Dakota 58103

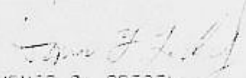
REPLY TO
ATTN OF TDDC

3 SEP 1965

SUBJECT: Information on unexplained phenomena

TO Foreign Technology Division
Air Force Systems Command
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

The enclosed correspondence is forwarded as a matter of possible interest to your division in view of recent reports of UFO sightings in this area.


HOMER G. GOEBEL
Brig Gen, NDak ANG
Base Detachment Commander

Cy to: Richard F. Durland

119th Fighter Group
ANG

United States Air Force Foreign Technology Division internal routing memo dated October 4, 1965 to Project Blue Book Chief Major Hector Quintanilla, Jr. at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The internal memo states that “an answer” had been prepared to address the South Dakota event. It cryptically ends with “Hope it meets our collective needs.” – whatever ‘needs’ that might have been referring to is unknown.

MEMO ROUTING SLIP		NEVER USE FOR APPROVALS, DISAPPROVALS, CONCURRENCES, OR SIMILAR ACTIONS		ACTION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1 TO	TDEW (Maj Quintanilla)	INITIALS	CIRCULATE	
		DATE	COORDINATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2			FILE	
			INFORMATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3			NOTE AND RETURN	
			PER CONVERSATION	
4			SEE ME	
			SIGNATURE	
REMARKS				
<p>Attached came from Sgt Moady. I have framed an answer which you may care to use. Hope it meets our collective needs.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">/s/ Jec.</p>				
FROM		DATE		
7 DFCC (Meteor)		4 Oct 65		
		PHONE		
		64289		

This document appears to be an initial draft of the response back to Richard Durland from Project Blue Book (undated / unsigned). The "natural explanation" mentioned for the cause of the twenty-seven circles in Willard Hill's wheat field is not identified here.

Mr. Richard F. Durland
County Ext. Agent
Britton, So. Dakota

Dear Mr. Durland;

Your letter of 31 August 1965 was forwarded
by the ~~North Dakota~~ Air National Guard ~~Base~~
Commander at Fargo, No. Dakota.

We believe there is a natural explanation
for the observations reported:

This is the official Project Blue Book response back to Marshall County extension agent Richard Durland from Project Blue Book Chief Major Hector Quintanilla, Jr. dated October 6, 1965. The "natural explanation" in the draft has been changed to a "plausible explanation" after consultation with an unnamed meteorologist. The Air Force's explanation for cause of the twenty-seven circles in Willard Hill's wheat field? "Dust devils".

FTD (TDEW)
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio 45433
6 Oct 65

Richard F. Durland
County Ext. Agent
South Dakota State College
U S Department of Agriculture, and County Cooperation
Britton, South Dakota

Dear Mr Durland,

Your letter of 31 August 1965 was forwarded by the Air National Guard Commander at Fargo, North Dakota.

Consultation with the meteorologist leads me to believe that the following is a plausible explanation:

"Dust devils" are described by the meteorologist as short duration miniature dry storms which may swirl in clockwise or counter clockwise direction. North Dakota summers frequently have these strong small whirlwinds. This phenomenon could plausibly account for the 27 six to seven foot diameter swirls made in the wheat fields of Veblen Township this past August. A clear, calm, hot dry summer afternoon over a flat field is conducive to producing intense whirlwinds of 5-10 foot diameter. The whirlwind is a result of rapidly rising parcels of air that have become lighter by being heated at the field level. Although they have been most frequently observed picking up dust, they probably occur as frequently without dust.

The temporary deformation of the wheat along the rapid wind path might contribute to later compaction of the soil. The wheat in the center of the whirlwind would be affected as would that in the peripheral area.

Thank you for your observations.

Sincerely,

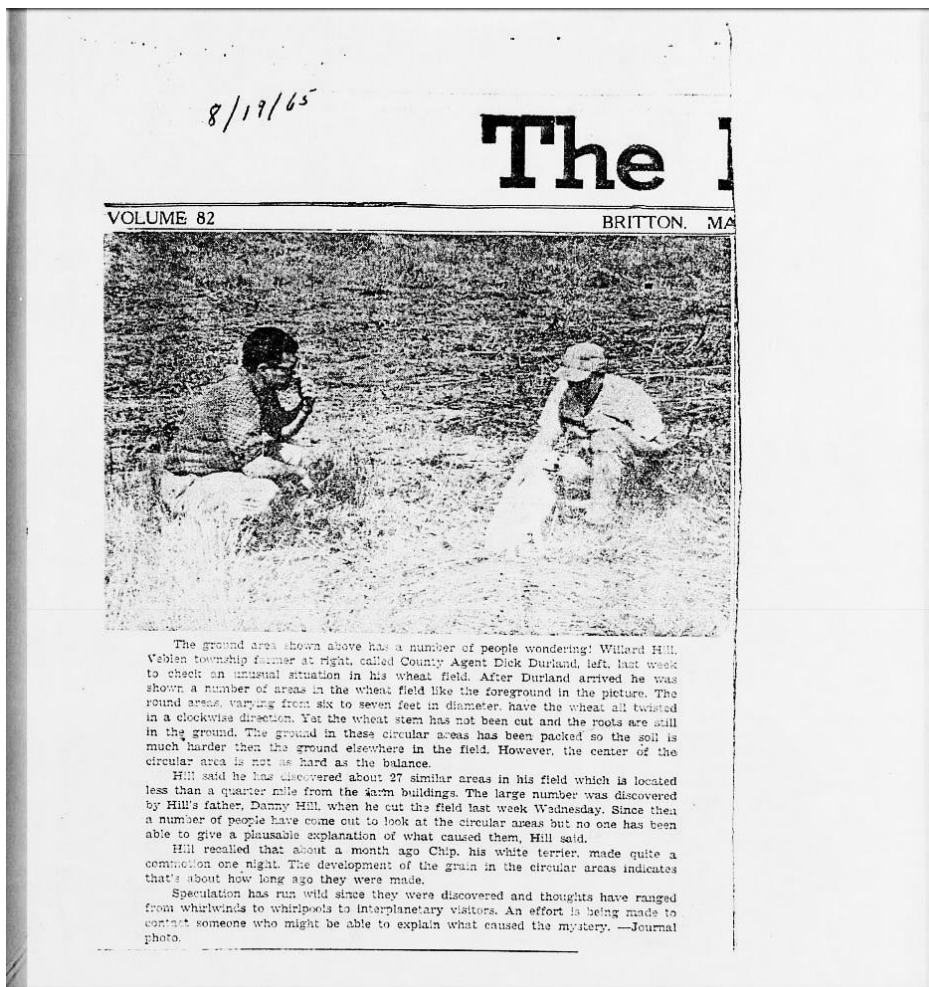
HQ

HECTOR QUINTANILLA, Jr, Major, USAF
Chief, Project Blue Book

OFFICIAL FILE COPY

T.D.E.W. / Jgla

News clipping dated Thursday, August 19, 1965 from *The Journal*, front page article detailing the discovery and mysterious nature of the twenty-seven swirled wheat circles found on Willard Hill's farm in Veblen Township, Marshall County, South Dakota. This news clipping had been included as part of the correspondence in the Project Blue Book files.



The article mentions important key details of the crop circle event including: the *twenty-seven* circles ranged from six to seven feet in diameter, the wheat was “twisted in a clockwise direction”, the wheat stems had not been cut and the roots were still in the ground, the ground in the circular areas was “packed” and was “much harder” than the ground elsewhere in the field with the exception of the centers of the circles, the farmer’s father Danny Hill discovered the crop circles on the prior Wednesday (August 11, 1965) and that based on the “development of the grain in the circular areas” they estimated the circles were about a month old when discovered which coincided with the farmer’s pet terrier dog causing a commotion one night.

8/19/65

The I

VOLUME 82

BRITTON, MA



The ground area shown above has a number of people wondering! Willard Hill, Veblen township farmer at right, called County Agent Dick Durland, left, last week to check an unusual situation in his wheat field. After Durland arrived he was shown a number of areas in the wheat field like the foreground in the picture. The round areas, varying from six to seven feet in diameter, have the wheat all twisted in a clockwise direction. Yet the wheat stem has not been cut and the roots are still in the ground. The ground in these circular areas has been packed so the soil is much harder than the ground elsewhere in the field. However, the center of the circular area is not as hard as the balance.

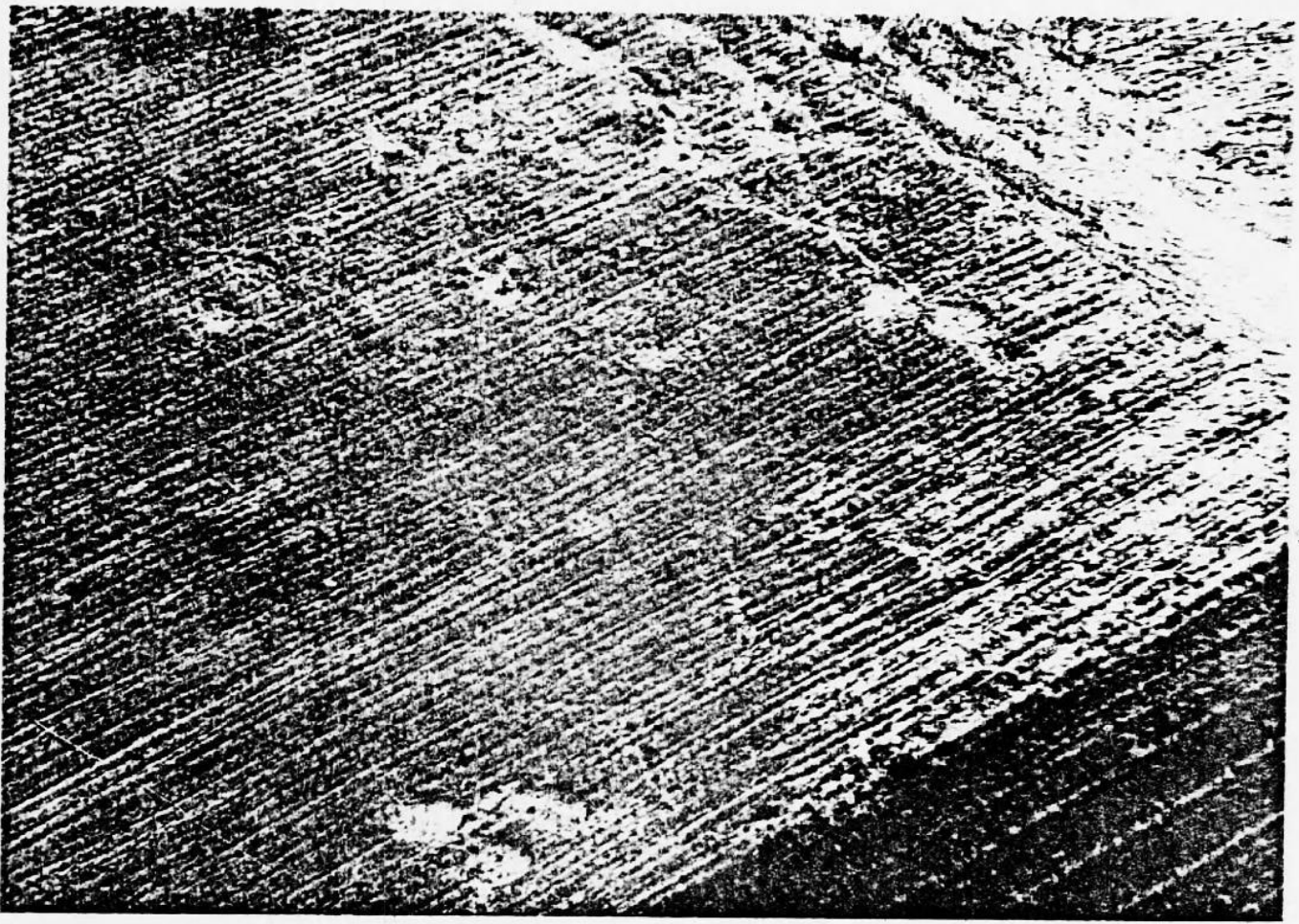
Hill said he has discovered about 27 similar areas in his field which is located less than a quarter mile from the farm buildings. The large number was discovered by Hill's father, Danny Hill, when he cut the field last week Wednesday. Since then a number of people have come out to look at the circular areas but no one has been able to give a plausible explanation of what caused them, Hill said.

Hill recalled that about a month ago Chip, his white terrier, made quite a commotion one night. The development of the grain in the circular areas indicates that's about how long ago they were made.

Speculation has run wild since they were discovered and thoughts have ranged from whirlwinds to whirlpools to interplanetary visitors. An effort is being made to contact someone who might be able to explain what caused the mystery. —Journal photo.

Although the Veblen Township, South Dakota crop circles event was not given a case number in the Project Blue Book files, the Air Force did keep it on record and called it a "case" (see note below).

This case contains 8, 8"x10" photos, 2, 2½"x4" photos, 1, 5"x7" photo and 3, 4"x5" negatives.



A photocopy of an aerial photograph of the Veblen Township, South Dakota crop circles event was included in the Project Blue Book files, although it is unknown who took the photo. This photo shows five clearly-defined crop circles in the wheat field – a cluster of three in an equilateral triangle, and another pair side-by-side. This photo appears numerous times (unredacted) in both the Mt. Airy, North Carolina case file and in the South Dakota (non-) case file. The reverse of this photo (below left) identifies the photo as “Britton, S.D.” perhaps as a reference to *The Journal* newspaper which is located in Britton, the county seat of Marshall County located over 20 miles west of Veblen Township.

(reverse)

2/2/00
Aug 06
Britton, S.D.



UNCLASSIFIED

Photocopied photograph from the Project Blue Book files. Pictured are farmer Willard Hill (left), and Marshall County Extension Agent Richard Durland (right) examining one of the twenty-seven swirled circles in wheat found on the Hill farm in Veblen Township, South Dakota on August 11, 1965. This photo appears to be a press photo – from *The Journal* (Britton, Marshall County, South Dakota) newspaper. The reverse of this photo (below) identifies the photo as “Britton, S.D.” perhaps as a reference to *The Journal* newspaper which is located in Britton, the county seat of Marshall County located over 20 miles west of Veblen Township.

(reverse)

RESULT OF
 F. D. S. DEPT.
 N.C. L.G.
 Aug 65
 Britton, S.D.



UNCLASSIFIED

Photocopied photograph from the Project Blue Book files. Pictured are farmer Willard Hill (left), and Marshall County Extension Agent Richard Durland (right) examining one of the twenty-seven swirled wheat circles found on the Hill farm in Veblen Township, South Dakota on August 11, 1965. This photo appears on the front page of Thursday, August 19, 1965 edition of *The Journal* (Britton, Marshall County, South Dakota) newspaper. The reverse of this photo (below) identifies the photo as "Britton, S.D." perhaps as a reference to *The Journal* newspaper which is located in Britton, the county seat of Marshall County located over 20 miles west of Veblen Township.

(reverse)

NCTC
Aug 65
Britton, S.D.

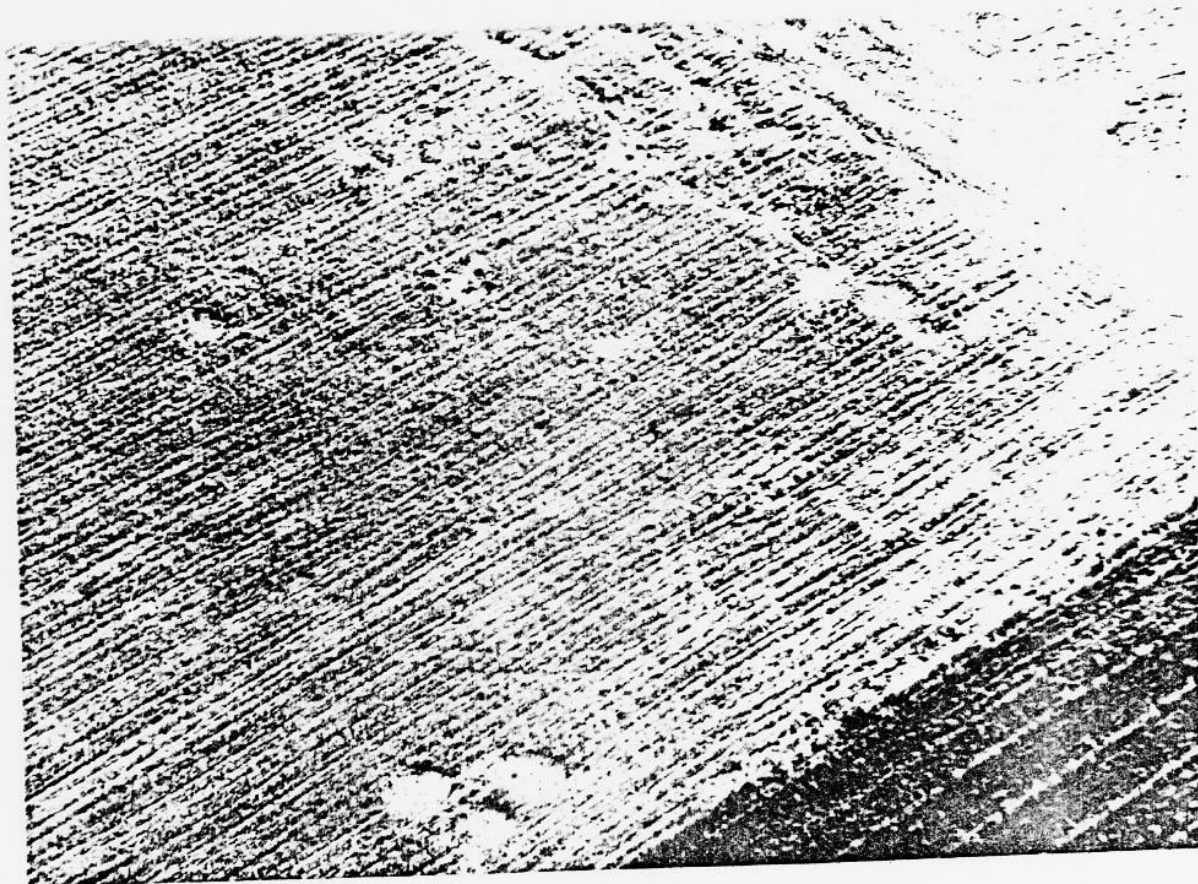


UNCLASSIFIED

Another photocopied photograph from the Project Blue Book files. Pictured are farmer Willard Hill (left), and Marshall County Extension Agent Richard Durland (right) examining one of the twenty-seven swirled wheat circles found on the Hill farm in Veblen Township, South Dakota on August 11, 1965. This photo appears on the front page of Thursday, August 19, 1965 edition of *The Journal* (Britton, Marshall County, South Dakota) newspaper. The reverse of this photo (below) identifies the photo as "Britton, S.D." perhaps as a reference to *The Journal* newspaper which is located in Britton, the county seat of Marshall County located over 20 miles west of Veblen Township. (Same as previous photo).

NOTE
Aug 65
Britton S.D.

(reverse)

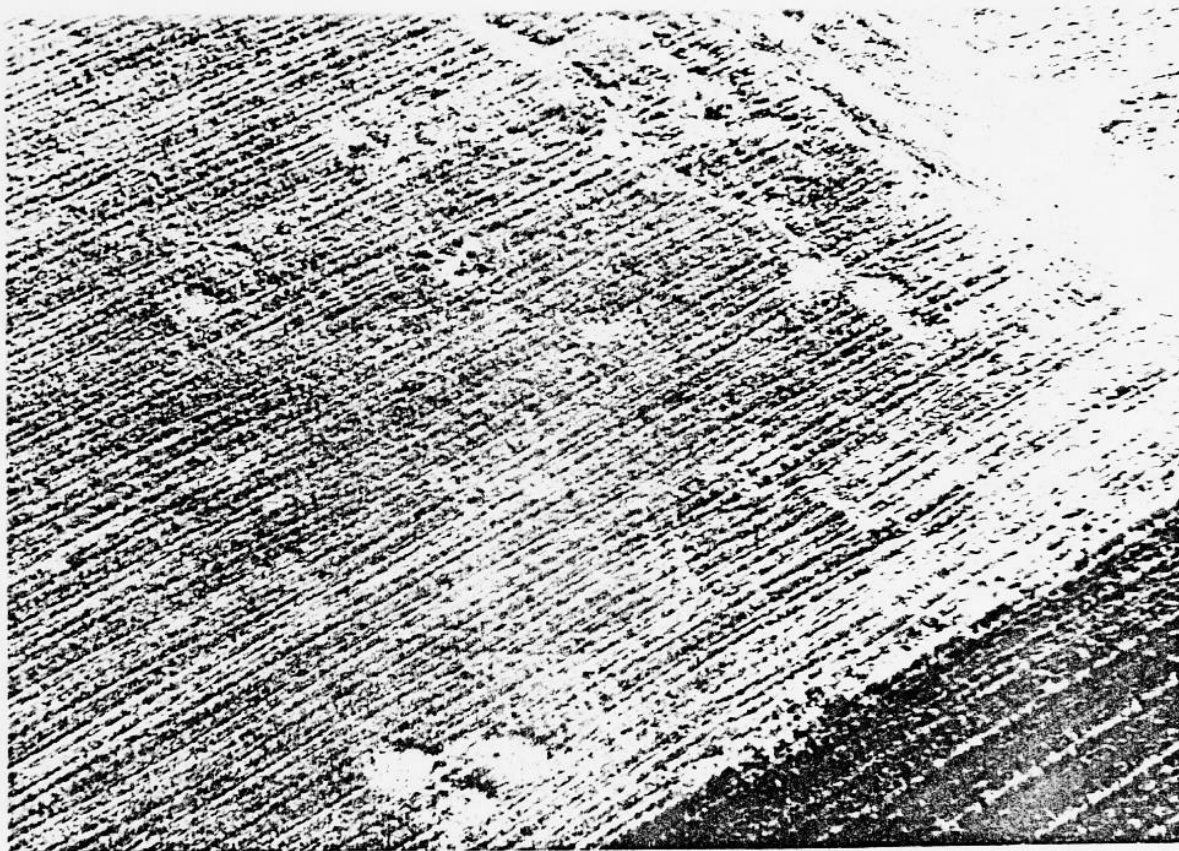


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(reverse)

10070
Aug 16
Britton, S.D.

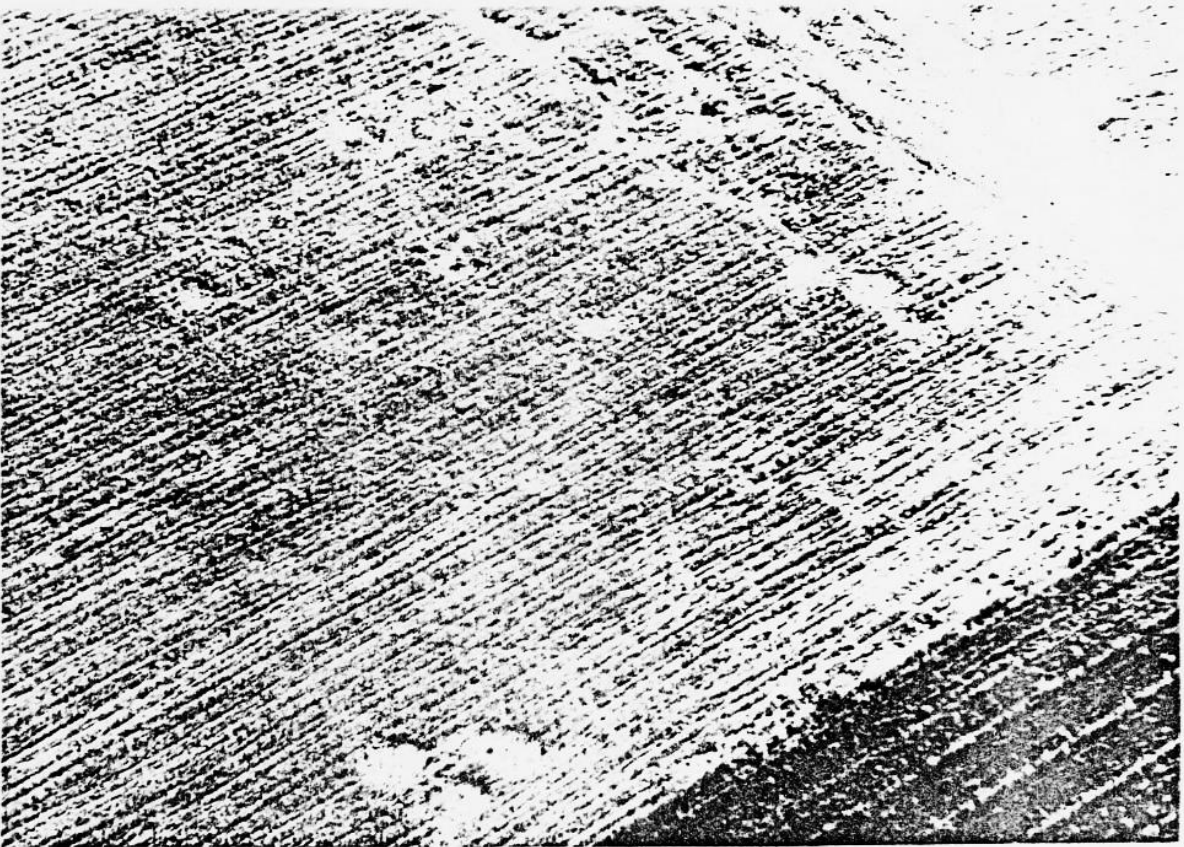


UNCLASSIFIED

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AFSC
Aug 66
Britton, S.D.

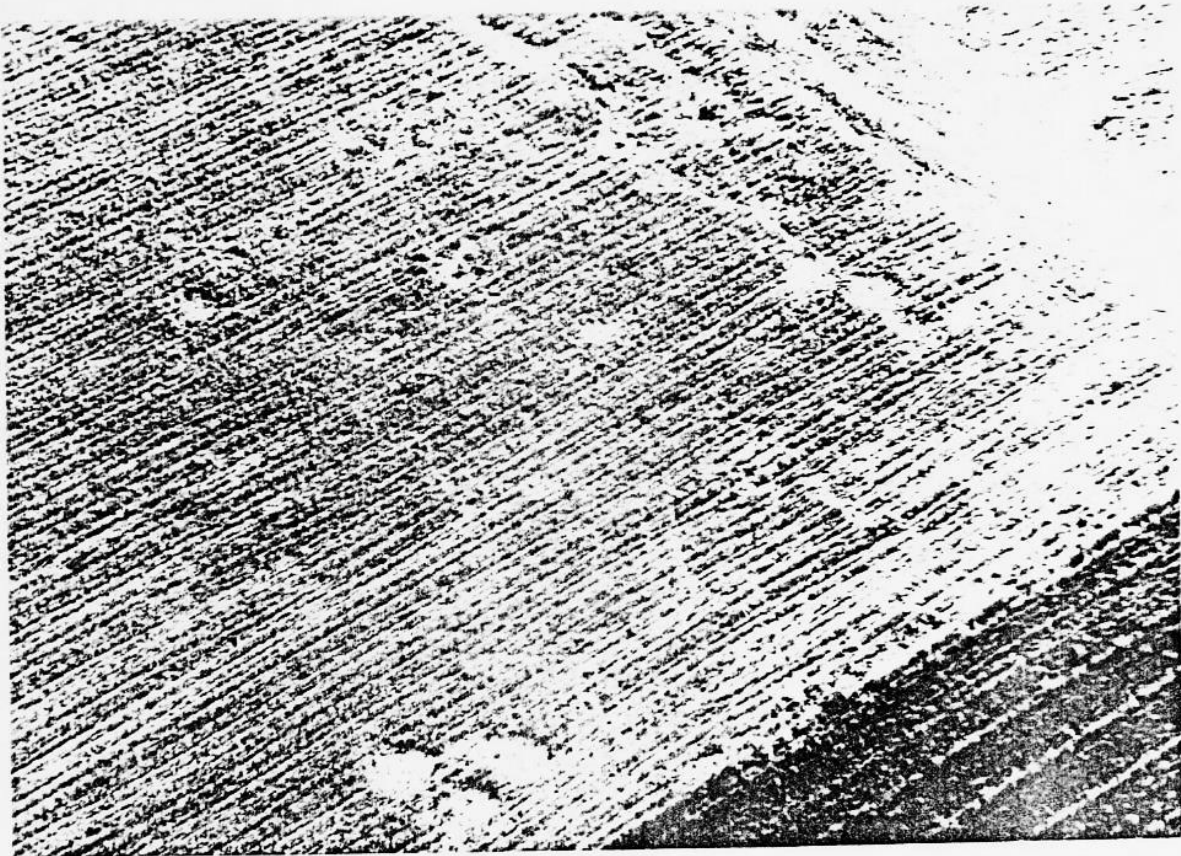
(reverse)



UNCLASSIFIED

A photocopy of an aerial photograph of the Veblen Township, South Dakota crop circles event was included in the Project Blue Book files, although it is unknown who took the photo. This photo shows five clearly-defined crop circles in the wheat field – a cluster of three in an equilateral triangle, and another pair side-by-side. This photo appears numerous times (unredacted) in both the Mt. Airy, North Carolina case file and in the South Dakota case file. The reverse of this photo (below) identifies the photo as “Veblen, S.D.” whereas the text on the back of the other aerial photos identify it as Britton, S.D. (same as previously pictured photo).

(reverse)



UNCLASSIFIED

A photocopy of an aerial photograph of the Veblen Township, South Dakota crop circles event was included in the Project Blue Book files, although it is unknown who took the photo. This photo shows five clearly-defined crop circles in the wheat field – a cluster of three in an equilateral triangle, and another pair side-by-side. This photo appears numerous times (unredacted) in both the Mt. Airy, North Carolina case file and in the South Dakota case file. The reverse of this photo (below) identifies the photo as “Britton, S.D.” perhaps as a reference to *The Journal* newspaper which is located in Britton, the county seat of Marshall County located over 20 miles west of Veblen Township. (Same as previously pictured photo).

NCIC
 Aug 65
 Britton, S.D.

(reverse)



These are the two 2½" x 4" photos mentioned on pg.11. These are copies of the same press photos from *The Journal*. Pictured in the top photo are farmer Willard Hill (left), and Marshall County Extension Agent Richard Durland (right) [the two are reversed in the bottom photo] examining one of the twenty-seven swirled circles in wheat found on the Hill farm in Veblen Township, South Dakota on August 11, 1965.



File 9835-B

August 19, 1965

Mt. Airy, North Carolina

8 photos

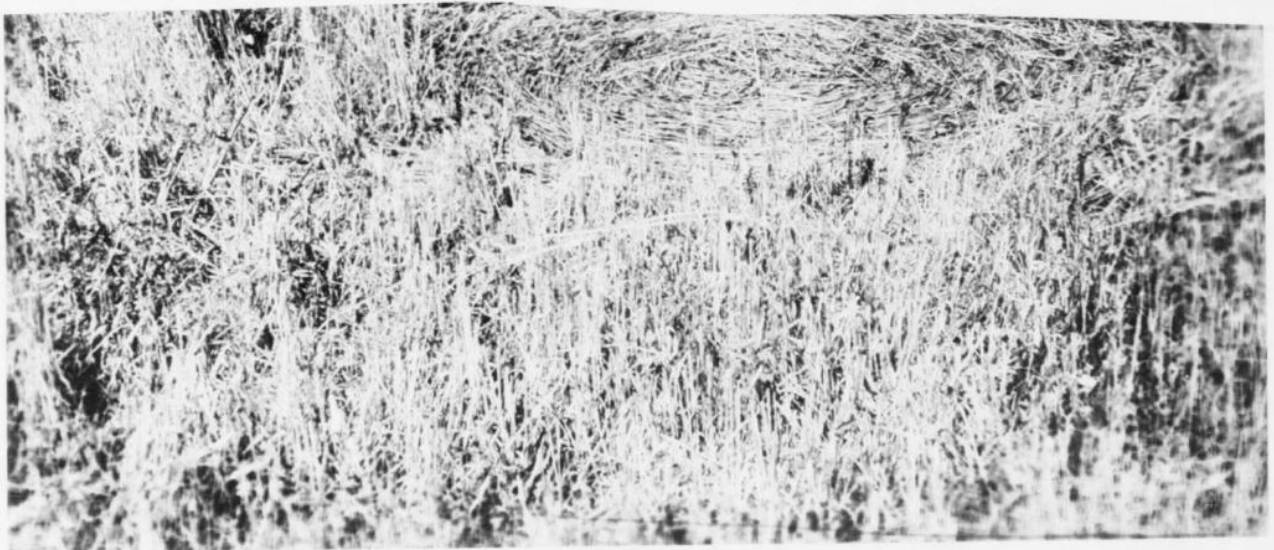
Labeled incorrectly? Should be
Veblen Township, South Dakota

Although the Veblen Township, South Dakota crop circles event was not given a case number in the Project Blue Book files, the Air Force did inexplicably file eight photos of this crop circle event in case file #9835-B labeled Mt. Airy, North Carolina of which the cover sheet is pictured here. The Mt. Airy, North Carolina case was a 'flying luminous ball' eyewitness event that also produced a swirled *grass* circle. No photos or investigation notes of the Mt. Airy, North Carolina event were actually included in this case file. The date of the reported Mt. Airy sighting is the same date as *The Journal* newspaper article detailing the Veblen Township, South Dakota crop circles event which may have caused confusion – two swirled circle events reported on the same date.

This is a heavily redacted photocopied photograph from the Project Blue Book files labeled Mt. Airy, North Carolina. This is the same press photo from the article in *The Journal* (Britton, Marshall County, South Dakota) newspaper. This photo shows one of the twenty-seven crop circles in wheat that appeared on the farm of Willard Hill in Veblen Township, South Dakota. See page 3 for the un-redacted comparison.

FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION, AFSC

UNCLASSIFIED



UNCLASSIFIED

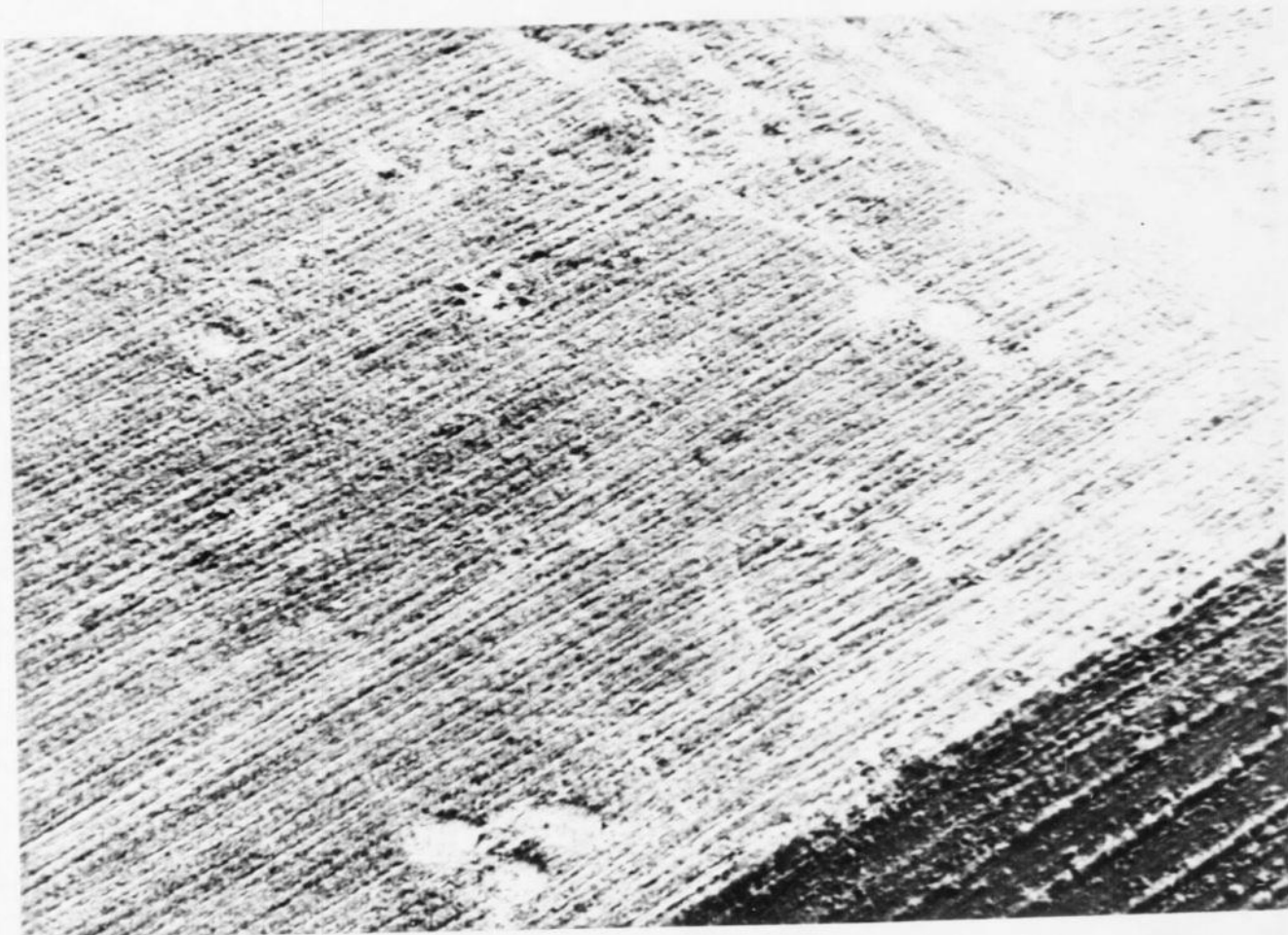
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FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION, AFSC

UNCLASSIFIED

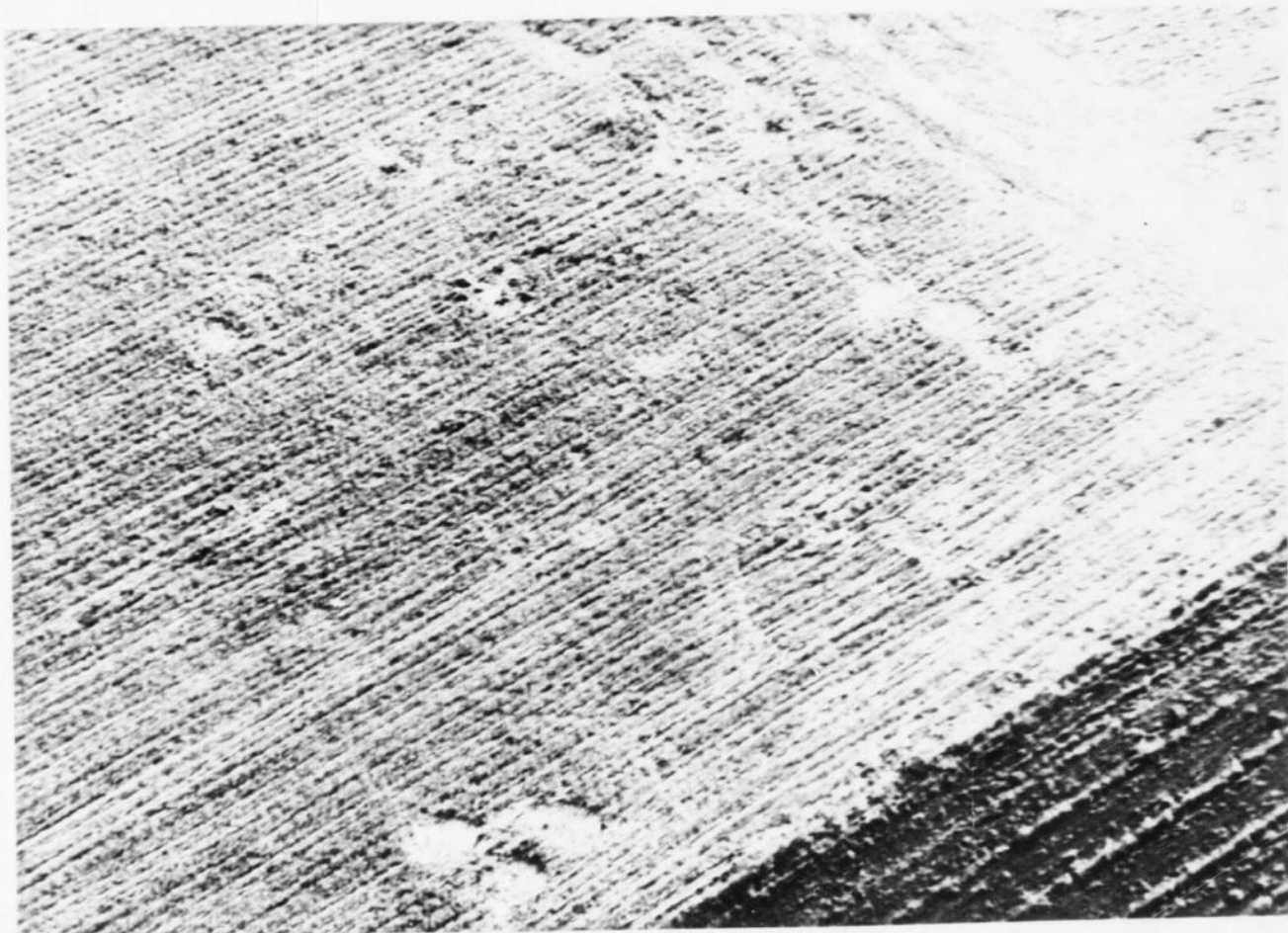


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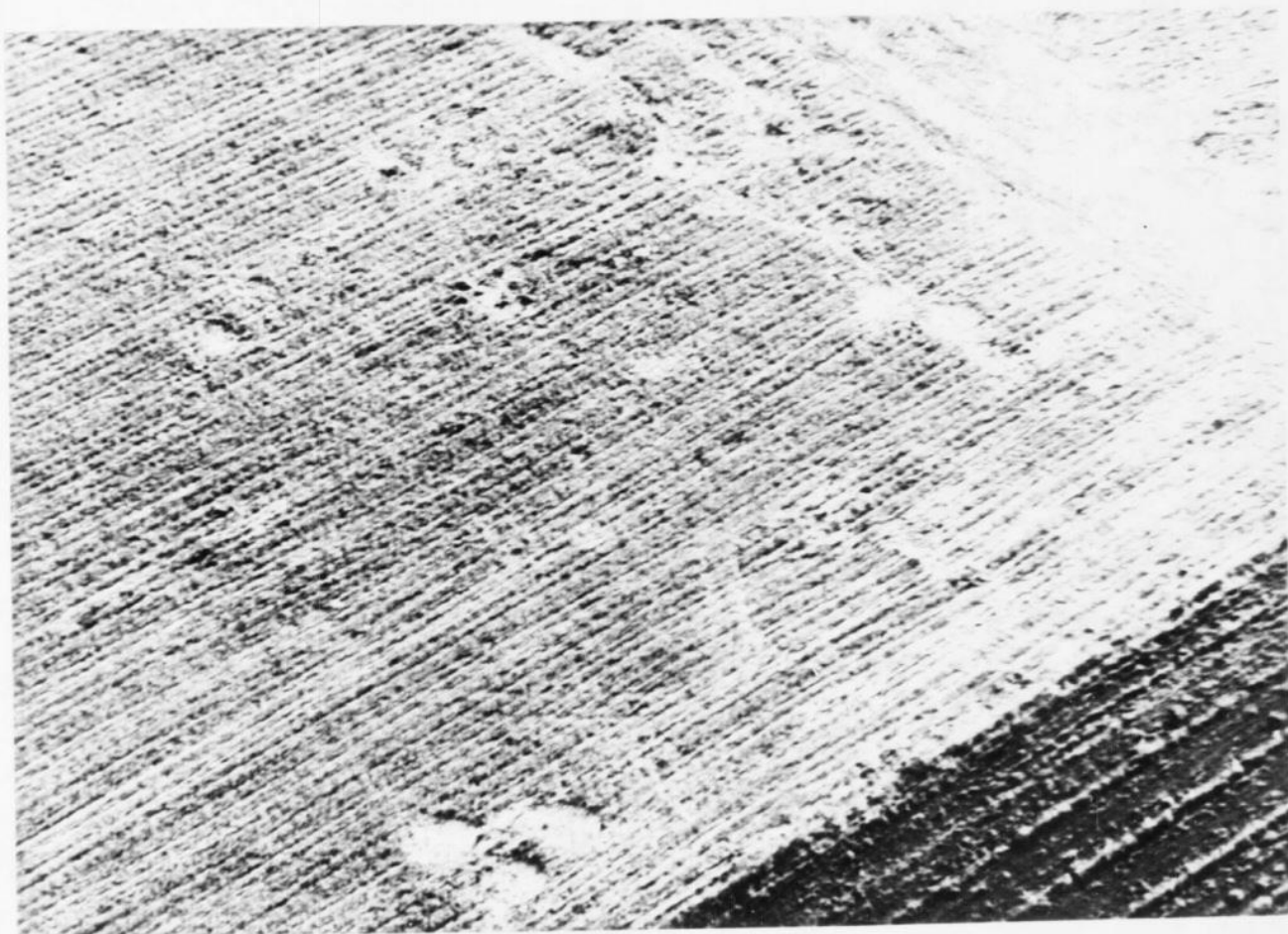
UNCLASSIFIED

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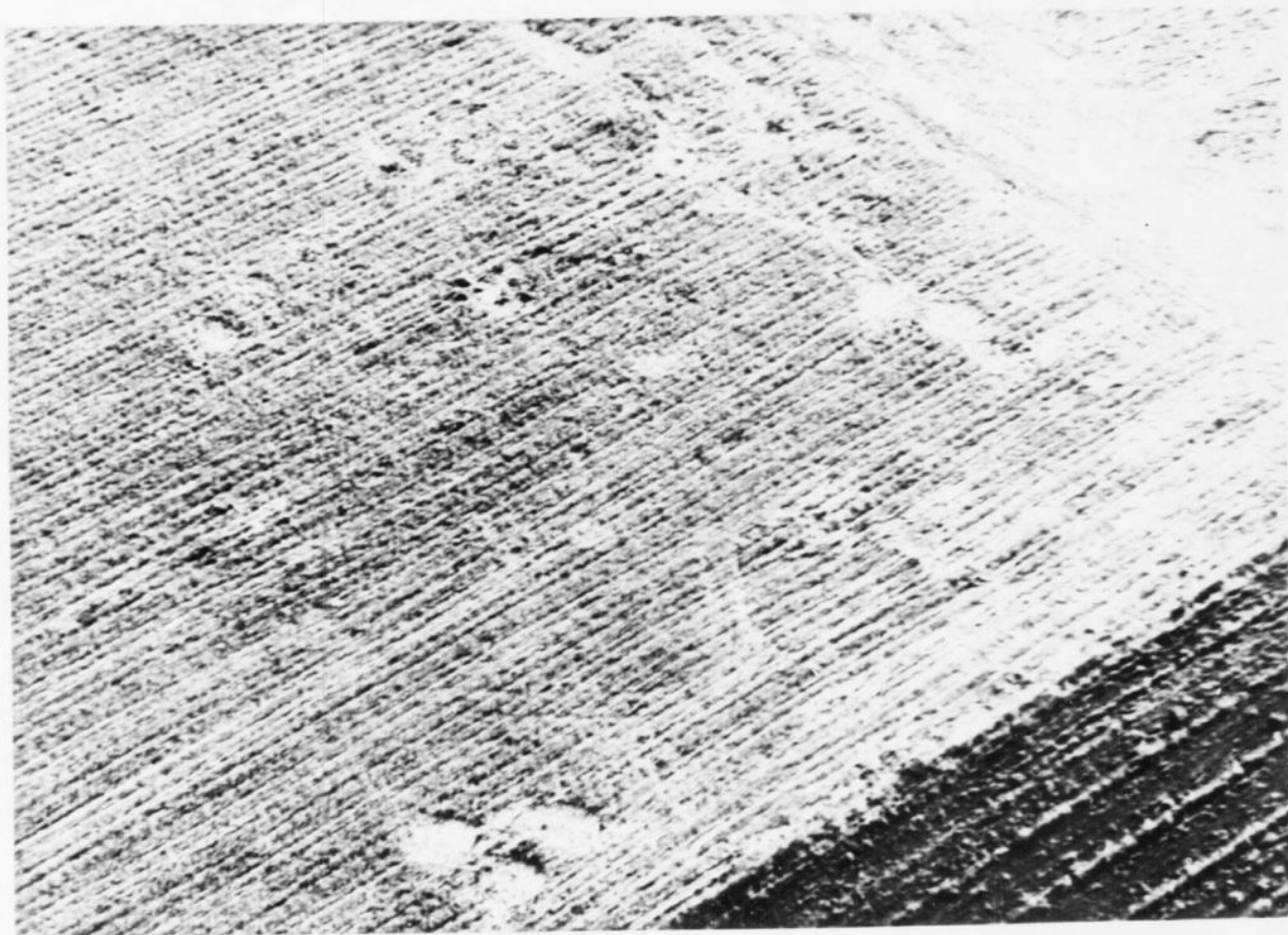
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FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION, AFSC

UNCLASSIFIED



UNCLASSIFIED

NO FILE #

VEBLEN TOWNSHIP, SOUTH DAKOTA

AUGUST 11, 1965

Conclusions: So what makes the Veblen Township, South Dakota crop circle event important for us to examine nearly 50 years later?

First, it pounds yet one more nail into the Doug 'n Dave 'we invented crop circles in 1978' hoaxer claim from 1991 that the crop circle skeptics and mainstream media cite ad nauseam. *Here we have a crop circle event in the USA from 1965 (more than a decade before Doug n' Dave even claimed to have begun their alleged hoaxing spree) that is documented with ground and aerial photos, and which is cited in a newspaper account and U.S. government documents. We have a county extension agent (an expert in commercial crops) who cannot determine a logical explanation, and an Air Force Brigadier General who seemingly links the swirled circles to local UFO sightings. The Air Force, in consultation with an unnamed meteorologist, explain the geometrically-aligned swirled circles as being produced by 'dust devils'.*

Second, it also pounds yet one more nail into the crop circle believers' myth narrative that crop circle formations have 'evolved' over time, and that no complex crop circle formations occurred until the late 1980's. *Here we have a crop circle event in 1965 which produced at least twenty-seven swirled-down circles in a wheat field, in discrete clusters of at least three in an equilateral triangle pattern, and two others side-by-side, with (as yet) unknown arrangements of the remaining twenty-two circles.*

Details of this crop circle event are similar to details of crop circle investigations of later years, including: a farmer who seemingly attributes the formation of these circles to some nighttime event which caused his dog to create a commotion, and that the ground inside the swirled circles had become packed and hard (as if it had been baked or dried out) as compared to the surrounding soil outside the circles or compared to the circles' centers. Note that the entirety of Marshall County, South Dakota had a population in 1965 of less than 6,500 persons (and less than 4,500 today) – this is a very rural area where most people largely depend upon agriculture for their livelihood.

Although there are dozens of earlier recorded crop circle cases in the United States (including ones with photographs), this is still a landmark crop circle case, and one for researchers to carry around with them to refer to when confronted with the nonsense cited by ill-informed skeptics, believers, and the mainstream media.

JEFFREY WILSON
JUNE 29, 2015

NO FILE #

VEBLEN TOWNSHIP, SOUTH DAKOTA

AUGUST 11, 1965

SOURCES:

Tremendous thanks to Rob Mercer at Miami Valley UFO Society for providing access to the recovered Project Blue Book files, and to Aaron Clark at the Cleveland Ufology Project for the Project Blue Book tip.

Project Blue Book Archive, Fold3.com

Rob Mercer, Miami Valley UFO Society

The Journal, Marshall County, South Dakota

Open Minds

Aaron Clark, Cleveland UFOlogy Project