

Box 172, AMF Postal Station
 Montreal International Airport
 Dorval, P.Q.
 November 2, 1967

Dear Mr. Howell,

Thank-you for your two letters. I received your second one after sending you the telegram. At first, when I saw the comet-like object near Capella, I thought it was a reflection of Capella in the telescope. However, after using three powers, and moving Capella out of the field of view, the object remained in the same position, and was magnified in proportion to the powers.

The 6" refractor of the Observatory of the Montreal Centre was used, and four other experienced observers saw this object, and we decided that it probably was a comet. I estimated it at about eighth magnitude, one other thought it much brighter, while the other two did not estimate brightness. My own observation was as follows:

Oct. 31, 1967 at 05:10 U.T. R.A. 05:12.9, Dec. 46°03'N (epoch 1950)
 Mag. about 8. Pointed head, short tail. No motion detected in one hour.

The next morning, I sent a telegram to the Smithsonian, giving details of this observation. Yesterday, I received the following reply by wire:

EVIDENCE SUGGESTS COMET HOWELL IS GHOST OF CAPELLA. PLEASE DEMONSTRATE.

So it looks like a one-in-a-million type of false alarm. Although I have received several comet "scares" before, this was the first one that we apparently could confirm. In our case, I doubt if the ghost was the telescope itself. We had a slight haze in the sky (which is usual for Montreal), and the reflection was probably in the atmosphere.

Anyway, when in doubt, it is a good idea to report. Already one member of this section has failed to get credit for a discovery because he didn't believe what he saw. And, we should still check this observation again on the next clear night, just to be sure.

Keep searching, and better luck next time!

Good observing,

Jim Low