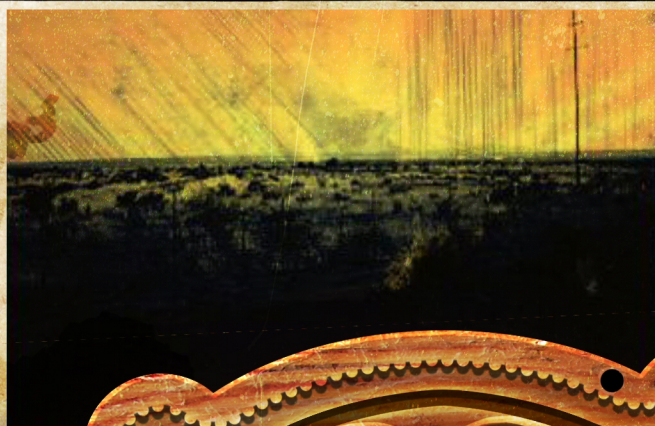




REPORT

MARFA LIGHTS

INVESTIGATION



*Marfa
Texas*

TX001

SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION



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The word “investigation” is defined as
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

Definition of Terms

Investigation Status: Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change have occurred that creates confounding variables.

Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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Part 1: Location Information

Marfa Ghost lights

Marfa Texas

Part 2: Location History:

Marfa, Texas was established in 1881. It is located in Presidio County, about 26 miles west of Alpine, Texas on U.S. Highway 67/90. The lights appear in an area SW of Chinati Mountain, on Mitchell Flat, near Twin Peaks, and over the flat prairie north of Cuesto Del Burro Mountains. A roadside plaque on US 90, 8 miles E of Marfa commemorates the lights. An abandoned USAF base is nearby.

Marfa, Texas is a small west Texas ranching community of about 2,000 folks, located near Big Bend National Park. Marfa is known primarily for two reasons. The classic movie "Giant", with Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, an incredibly clean-cut Dennis Hopper and James Dean, was filmed in Marfa. Marfa is also home of the semi-famous Marfa Mystery Lights.

Part 3: Reported Phenomena (General)

The Marfa lights are visible every clear night between Marfa and Paisano Pass in northeastern Presidio County as one faces the Chinati Mountains. At times they appear colored as they twinkle in the distance. They move about, split apart, melt together, disappear, and reappear. Presidio County residents have watched the lights for over a hundred years.

The first historical record of them recalls that in 1883 a young cowhand, Robert Reed Ellison, saw a flickering light while he was driving cattle through Paisano Pass and wondered if it was the campfire of Apache Indians. He was told by other settlers that they often saw the lights, but when they investigated they found no ashes or other evidence of a campsite. Joe and Sally Humphreys, also early settlers, reported their first sighting of the lights in 1885. Cowboys herding cattle on the prairies noticed the lights and in the summer of 1919 rode over the

mountains looking for the source, but found nothing. World War I observers feared that the lights were intended to guide an invasion.



During World War II pilots training at the nearby Midland Army Air Field outside Marfa looked for the source of the elusive lights from the air, again with no success.

The Lights, which most people describe as spherical, appear south of Marfa each evening. They appear to bounce around, vanish, and then re-appear elsewhere. According to the legend, these lights have been observed since the 1800s. The Lights have become an important tourist attraction in Marfa, a town that has seen much better days. On a nice evening, dozens of people will stop and view the Lights at the "official" viewing area, about 10 miles east of town on Highway 90.

Apache legends say the lights are the spirit of Chief Alsate - condemned to wander the area after he offended a tribal God. Early settlers thought they were the lanterns of a family that got lost in the 1850's.

The first recorded sighting of the lights was by rancher Robert Ellison in 1883. Various descriptions include campfires, phosphorescent minerals, swamp gas, static electricity, St. Elmo's Fire, and "ghost lights," the lights reportedly change colors, move around, and change in intensity. Scholars have reported over seventy-five local folk tales dealing with the unknown phenomenon.

Part 4: Observed Phenomena

We went out on three separate occasions and viewed the lights. We also had spectral data on different kinds of lights such as headlights, taillights, street lights, and fog lights. We also obtained spectral data on hydrogen, nitrogen, and helium lights. We will record our results by taking pictures and using a spectroscope. The results will be compared with the data we previously acquired on natural and manmade light sources.

The absence of thermal anomalies indicates that there was nothing on the ground, such as a sphere of ball lightning or a cloud of burning gas, to generate such a signal. We can therefore eliminate any discrete source of light and/or heat.

Part 5: Historical Research

The story of the Marfa Lights often makes the point that they were seen by early settlers in the 1880's. A particular person, Robert Ellison, is frequently cited. Here is the history of Marfa based on reputable sources. Robert Ellison is quoted in Cecilia Thompson's "History of Marfa and Presidio County" (F 392.P7 T52 1985. Volume 1, 1533-1900. Volume 2 is from 1901 - 1946). However, he was about 70 years old in 1937 when "someone" asked him about the lights he saw in 1883. The person that asked him couldn't have been Thompson who published the book in 1985 unless she had heard it from him as a child. This means the sighting info is second-hand to Thompson and she got it from another source who actually asked Ellison about it. Moreover, Thompson says that Ellison wrote his memoirs in 1937 at the age of 70, but that he did not include his sighting of the Marfa Lights in 1883. Apparently had told his family

this information, and related this to some interviewer, who again was not Thompson.

Part 6: Conclusion



We scientifically proved with a number of experiments that the Marfa Lights we saw were indeed only headlights coming from a distant road in the mountains on U.S. highway 67. We were told, however, that the "Marfa Lights" we saw were not the only recorded type of them seen. It is said that there have been

mysterious lights seen in the horizon to the left of the "headlights" that are unexplainable. We unfortunately were not lucky enough to witness these. Perhaps we will go out again repeat the experiment over to see if we get the same results.

From our analysis, we believe that car headlights shining in the direction of the Observation Site, reflected along the concave surface of soil alongside of Highway 67 are the source of the Lights. The highly reflective soil acts as a mirrored surface that creates the observed phenomena.

A car descending from the Chinati Mountains would begin shining its headlights in the direction of the observer several miles to the southwest before it turns northward towards Marfa. When the headlights are facing the observer in this fashion, they are aligned with the highly reflective soil that flanks the road. There are several locations where a car changes angle and the area of reflective soil is sufficiently wide to be seen by the observer. There are several small hills to the east of the Rancheria Hills that will interfere with reflected light. The Rancheria Hills themselves will stop much of the reflection to someone looking in that direction from Marfa. The soil creates a reflected beam that appears

magnified and can appear to split and merge to an observer at the Marfa Lights Observation Site. This duplication, splitting and merging is likely the result of the cars' movements along the highway. Once the car descends down the mountain and onto the plain, it no longer reflects its lights in the direction of the observer and the Rancheria Hills and other topographic features block the transmission of the car's lights at that point.

Other observations:

- U.S. Highway 67 is visible from the Marfa lights viewing location.
- The frequency of lights southwest of the view park correlates with the frequency of vehicle traffic on U.S. 67.
- The motion of the observed lights was in a straight line, corresponding to U.S. 67.

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