



Here are some extracts that could have come from a diary written by

CLYDE TOMBAUGH (1906 - 1997)

Tombaugh made a telescope on his father's farm in Illinois, USA. He used the telescope to make very detailed and accurate sketches of Mars and Jupiter. He found the ninth planet Pluto (known as Planet X until then) in 1930.

2nd January 1929

Today I received a letter from Lowell Observatory. I am so excited as they have invited me to join them on a three-month trial. They said they were impressed by the drawings of Jupiter and Mars I sent them last month.

15 January 1929

I arrived at Flagstaff early this afternoon. Dr Slipher met me at the depot and drove me up Mars Hill. The yellow pine forest is in stark contrast to the treeless plains back home. I am rather unnerved by it all, everyone is a stranger; I am 1000 miles from home and do not have enough money for a return ticket..... Dr Slipher has assigned me a bedroom on the second floor and tomorrow he will show me the new dome. I can't wait!

16 January 1929

Today not only did I see the dome but also the new 13-inch photographic telescope - I was so excited. Stanley Sykes and his son were installing some hand controls, but, what was even more amazing was that someone told me that this is the telescope we will use to find Lowell's predicted Planet X!! I can't believe it! I've read all Percy Lowell's work about how he has studied the slight variations in the orbits of Uranus and Neptune to predict a ninth planet, and here I am sat in his observatory. It's been a long time since Lowell died and no one has been able to continue his work. But that's just what I've been hired to do.

March 1929

It's been ten weeks since I started the search for Planet X. So many nights in that cold dome. I've made pairs of photographs of the same part of the sky several days apart. Then I study the plates under the Blink-Comparator and look for small shifts in position of one of the hundreds of points of light that would show there's a planet there. It takes a long time, sometimes a

week for each pair of plates. Maybe tonight I'll get what I'm looking for.

May 1929

I was coming upstairs from the darkroom earlier today when I bumped into Dr Slipher, and I asked him if he had had any luck in finding Planet X. He seemed quite upset and unhappy when he said that he had found nothing, I think he is starting to feel the pressure. I think that he really wants to be the one to find it, but he seems to be giving up. Perhaps Planet X is in another region of the zodiac?

June 1929

About one hundred big plates have accumulated, and only a few have been blinked. I am completely exhausted and Dr Slipher came to my office today and asked me to blink the plates. What a nightmare!

21 January 1930

I decided to re-photograph in Gemini tonight. It was a crystal clear night and I took the first plate in the Delta Geminotium region. The wind soon started to get up.

18 February 1930

Fantastic!! Today I have been studying the plates which I took last month and at 4pm I noticed a faint shift of position of a faint star. It's it, it has to be Planet X! Everyone is so excited, some of the observatory staff are going to watch the star for a few weeks just to confirm it. I can't believe it, it's finally happened!!

13 March 1930

Today has been the day. We officially announced the discovery of Planet X today, or I should rather say Planet Pluto, as that's what we decided to call it. It has made the front page of newspapers around the world!