

**B-52 Bomber Crash (Plainfield, Vt.)
Collection, 1960-1961
MSA 912**

Introduction

This collection contains items related to the crash of a U.S. Air Force B-52 bomber on December 9, 1960, into a pasture in Plainfield, Vermont, on the outskirts of the city of Barre. It consists of photocopied Air Force reports and related forms on the crash, as well as clippings from various newspapers from December 12, 1960, to July 1961. The collection was donated by Brian S. Lindner of Waterbury, Vermont, who has studied the history of numerous plane crashes in Vermont.

Biographical note

Brian Sanford Lindner was born July 17, 1952, in Burlington, Vermont. He has been employed as a corporate historian for companies based in Montpelier and Stowe, Vermont. Mr. Lindner has worked as a team leader and emergency medical technician with local search and rescue teams. He has written numerous articles and given talks throughout the state of Vermont on plane crashes, other transportation accidents, and the history of the ski patrol in Vermont.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains photocopies of the Air Force reports used in Mr. Lindner's research into the crash of U.S. Air Force B-52 plane 55-114A near Barre, Vermont, on December 9, 1960, as well as newspaper clippings that chronicled the crash.

The bomber was on a training flight that originated from Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts. The bomber often carried atomic bombs during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1960s. The bomber was fortunately not carrying any weapons during this routine training mission over New York state. There were eight crew members on board. Final Air Force reports attribute the crash to a series of human errors rather than a problem with the plane. The plane had been practicing a nuclear bombing run, flying at about 300 miles per hour and descending rapidly while banking steeply. The navigator mistakenly believed that the plane was out of control. Without orders, he ejected from the plane. Then the captain, thinking the plane was breaking up, ordered the rest of the crew to eject. He stabilized the plane before ejection. The bomber then flew, pilotless and crewless, over Lake Champlain into Vermont and finally crashing into a pasture and wooded area in Plainfield, near East Hill in Barre Town. One crew member died, his parachute failing to deploy; the remainder of the crew parachuted to safety and were found many miles from each other in the Adirondack mountains of New York. The debris from the crash was scattered over an area of approximately 45 acres. No one was injured in Vermont, and there was very little property damage since the bomber crashed in farm fields and woods.

The Air Force reports in the collection are organized chronologically and contain pre-flight inspections of the aircraft, its flight history, information about each of the crew members

and their flight experience, detailed information about the bomber's final training mission and the events leading to the crash, as well as information and analysis of the crash itself.

The newspaper clippings in the collection are from various newspapers throughout Vermont that reported on the crash. They contain interviews with local people in Barre and elsewhere in central Vermont who witnessed the bomber circling the Barre area before crashing in a massive explosion. Hundreds of Vermonters reached the site before Air Force officials arrived.

Related Collections

Vermont Aviation Council Records, 1994-2001 (MSA 539:055), compiled by Brian Lindner, include the outline of a talk given by Lindner on the history of plane crashes in Vermont.

Brian Lindner, *The History of the Camel's Hump Bomber Crash* (358.415 L644), published in 1978, details the crash of another Air Force bomber from Westover Air Force base in Massachusetts. The B-24 bomber crashed into the mountain known as Camel's Hump, near Waterbury, Vermont, on October 16, 1944.

Inventory

MSA 912:01 Air Force report, pp. 1-126, incomplete.
:02 _____, pp. 227-304.
:03 Newspaper clippings, December 10-12, 1960.
:04 _____, December 13-15, 1960.
:05 _____, December 16-30, 1960.
:06 _____, January – July 1960.

Patricia Wiley
June 2021
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