

The Skyscraper

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The monthly publication of



Amateur Astronomical Society
of Rhode Island

47 Peepoad Road
North Scituate, RI 02857

www.theskyscrapers.org

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The Skyscraper

August 2007

August Meeting with Dr. Jim Jackson

FRIDAY, AUGUST 3RD AT SEAGRAVE OBSERVATORY

A STAR IS BORN

Dr. Jackson of Boston University will discuss the birth of stars. Stars form from the gravitational collapse of small "cores" deep inside giant molecular clouds. Since these clouds are opaque at optical wavelengths, the observations of these collapsing "protostars" must be conducted at radio and infrared wavelengths, where the clouds are more transparent. I will show how the observations reveal the various stages of star formation, from "starless cores," though "hot cores," and eventually, young stars. Dr. Jackson will pay special attention to the most massive stars, whose origins are especially difficult to understand. A byproduct of this process is the origin of planets, and he will discuss some of the observational evidence that shows young solar systems in the process of formation.

AUGUST 2007

3
FRIDAY

7:30PM **August Meeting**
Seagrave Observatory

4
SATURDAY

8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory,
weather permitting

11
THURSDAY

8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory,
weather permitting

18
SATURDAY

8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory,
weather permitting

25
SATURDAY

8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory,
weather permitting

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President's Message

Glenn Jackson, President

July was a busy month for members of Skyscrapers. Delores Rinaldi provided the essentials for a great cookout. Which was followed by a presentation of the Arizona Trip by John Kocur. All that attended had more than their share of food to eat and many great moments and laughs were shared with the members participating in the Arizona trip. Thanks to Jane, Jackie, Sue and the many others that made the evening a success. The peace, tranquility and camaraderie experienced at Seagrave that evening will last a long time in the memories of those that attended.

The cookout was followed by a star party, that was organized by Ted Ferneza, for the Harmony Hill Library. The visit to Seagrave was a follow up to some reading that they had participated in. The topic for the evening was "The Mysteries of the Nighttime Sky." The group reports that they were awed by the real mysteries of the night sky as seen from Seagrave Observatory.

Tracy Haley was host to the local girl scouts and families. Many of the girl scouts were working on the Space Exploration badges. The group was impressed with our facilities and the knowledge of our members. Many plan a return trip in the near future. Thanks to all who helped spark an interest in these young girls scouts.

The Observatory Committee met and is now trying a new method of signing up for public nights. Hopefully this will reduce or even perhaps eliminate the problems associated with manning the telescopes

on public night. If you are interested in learning how to operate the telescopes, or interested in assisting on Public Night contact Tracy Haley.

And last but not least the "Seagrave Expansion Committee" met and is considering many options to resolving the parking, meeting room, and bathroom facilities issues. If you have some ideas or would like to be involved contact Jerry Jeffrey.

Looking forward to next month several members will be traveling to The Stellafane Convention in Springfield Vermont. This event always produces a multitude of experiences that will be shared at the next meeting. The group is looking forward to a dry, clear weekend. This hasn't always been the case but we are always prepared for the worst, and anticipating the best.

A special workshop is planned next month with John Briggs. Seagrave Observatory is fortunate to own a historic multi-prism spectroscope made by John Browning of London, a famous 19th century instrument maker. This remarkable device was one of Frank Seagrave's early accessories with the 8¼ inch Clark refractor that he acquired in 1878. We all look forward to this special opportunity.

Have you paid your dues for the current year? Our membership now stands at 78 paid members. That is only 62% of the paid membership for last year.

Looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting August 3rd.



Photo by Tracey Haley

Picture Perfect for the Perseids

Dave Huestis

Either the Moon or the weather has conspired to prevent us southern New Englanders from seeing one of the best annual meteor showers for more years than I care to count. That shower of shooting stars is the August Perseids.

Most people know about this mid-summer shower because folks spend more time outdoors during the Summer. If you are old enough to remember the prevalent drive-in theaters that once dotted the countryside, many families often caught glimpses of meteors blazing across the sky behind the huge projection screen as they watched a movie. Or families were amazed at the number of meteors seen from dark skies while they were camping.

I can't predict the weather prospects for the Perseids this year, but I do know that on the peak night of activity, August 12-13, the Moon will be New and will not interfere by brightening the sky whatsoever! All we have to do is cross our fingers and hope that the sky is clear.

Though the Perseids can be observed all night once the sun sets and the sky darkens, some research indicates the peak activity may occur around 1:00 am on the 13th. Be sure to comfortably position yourself in a location as far away from any lights as possible.

The Perseids appear to radiate from an area of sky, called the radiant point, in the constellation Perseus. Perseus is well up in the northeast sky after midnight. Face this general direction when you first begin your observing session and gradually follow the radiant across the sky. As Perseus moves up and across the sky, the number of meteors will increase as the night progresses.

If many meteors appear to be coming from another area of sky, then shift your gaze and concentrate on that sky region. Still, it doesn't hurt (much) to constantly scan as much sky as possible without straining your neck!

The Perseids, when seen elsewhere over the years, have varied in intensity. During this year's suggested peak at 1:00 am, one may see between 60 and 90 meteors per hour giving that moonlight will not be present. The green, red or orange shooting stars enter our atmosphere at a blazing 134,222 miles per hour! And some members of the Perseid shower are bright and often produce exploding fireballs. Remember, predictions can be off by several hours, if they come to fruition at all. So be persistent in your Perseid watch.

And if bad weather plagues peak night, try observing the night before and the night after. You'll see about one quarter of the peak night rates, or about 15-25 meteors per hour at best.

Let's hope we at least have clear skies to observe a few shooting stars known as the Perseids. Prospects haven't been this promising in years! Don't forget to visit Seagrave Memorial Observatory on Peepoad Road in North Scituate this Summer on any clear Saturday night. Jupiter will be well placed for observing. Check out his four bright moons as they orbit around this giant planet. Also be sure to ask one of our volunteer telescope operators to point out a few of the summer "deep sky" wonders.

Visit our web site for additional information: www.theskyscrapers.org.

Keep your eyes to the skies.

Total Lunar Eclipse at Moonset

Dave Huestis

Were you one of the estimated 300 people who gathered at Tasca soccer field in North Scituate to view last March's total lunar eclipse, only to be disappointed by the clouds that did a much better job of covering the Moon than the Earth's shadow did? Well, you may remember I mentioned you would have another opportunity in August.

Well believe it or not, that date, August 28, is almost upon us. Unfortunately even with good weather we will be not be able to view totality. The circumstances are a little different this time around.

Totality for us in southern New England will begin just as the Moon is setting in the west at dawn. So this event will not be for you folks who are not morning people!!

Yes, this eclipse will be a total lunar eclipse. If you want to see the eclipse in its entirety you will have to travel west of the Rocky Mountains. For us locally it will begin when the Moon slides into the Earth's light shadow called the penumbra at 3:52 am, Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). This phase is so dim it is undetectable. Perhaps a half hour later a keen-eyed

observer will notice a subtle shading along the top left edge of the lunar surface. (Imagine the Moon as a clock face. Darkening should appear around the ten o'clock position.) Just prior to the Moon entering the Earth's dark umbral shadow should one notice that the moonlight looks somewhat subdued.

The Moon will enter the Earth's dark umbral shadow at 4:51 am EDT. This begins the partial eclipse phase with the Moon just 12 degrees above the west-southwest horizon. The dark shadow will also appear in the ten o'clock position, then it will proceed to cover the Moon from the upper left to the lower right (four o'clock position). Totality begins at 5:52 am EDT when the lunar surface is completely within the Earth's dark umbral shadow. This eclipse should be a "dark" one, for the Moon will slide deep into the shadow, unlike last March's event.

Unfortunately we won't be able to determine that here because sunrise is at approximately 6:05 am EDT and moonset at approximately 6:07 am EDT. And, bright twilight will certainly spoil the view well before that. In addition, you'll need an unobstructed west-southwest horizon.

Totality will last for 90 minutes for observers farther out in the western states. That's a long time. I think some folks will get a little impatient waiting for sunlight to once again strike the lunar surface.

So if you want to watch the partial phase before the Moon dips below the horizon, I think you will be able to follow it about 90 - 95% of the way through.

Otherwise, head out west!

Also, do some web surfing prior to the event to see if anyone will be providing a webcast of this total lunar eclipse. I've watched several astronomical events from my home computer that we were unable to observe first-hand in Rhode Island for one reason or another.

If you do find a webcast, here are times (all times are EDT - Eastern Daylight Time) of the remaining important phases:

Mid-totality: 6:37 am Totality ends: 7:22 am
 Partial ends: 8:24 am Penumbra ends: 9:22 am - not detectable

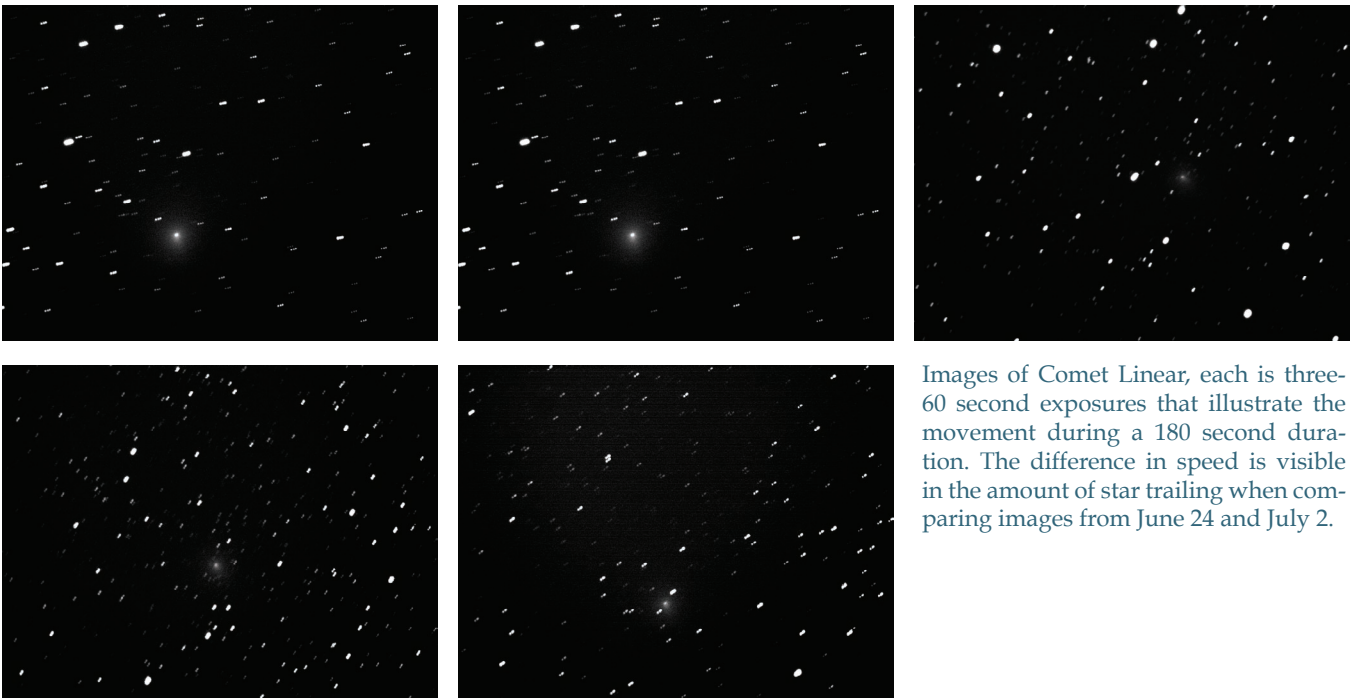
If you have binoculars or a telescope, now will be the time to put them to good use. The more optical aid an observer uses, the more detail one will discern. Even if you don't have access to expensive equipment, don't despair. Mother Nature provided you with a pair of the most valuable observing tools -- your eyes! Use them to follow the progress of this beautiful event.

So, are you a morning person? If the weather is favorable make every effort to see this beautiful celestial show when you can observe in comfortable conditions. The next one on February 21, 2008, will be seen in its entirety for us in New England, but it will most likely be very cold. At least totality during that event will be at a reasonable hour: 10:00 pm EST.

Good luck, keep your eyes to the skies.

Comet Linear (C/2006 VZ₁₃)

Photos by Bob Forgiel



Images of Comet Linear, each is three-60 second exposures that illustrate the movement during a 180 second duration. The difference in speed is visible in the amount of star trailing when comparing images from June 24 and July 2.

Omit Needless Bytes!

By Patrick Barry and Tony Phillips

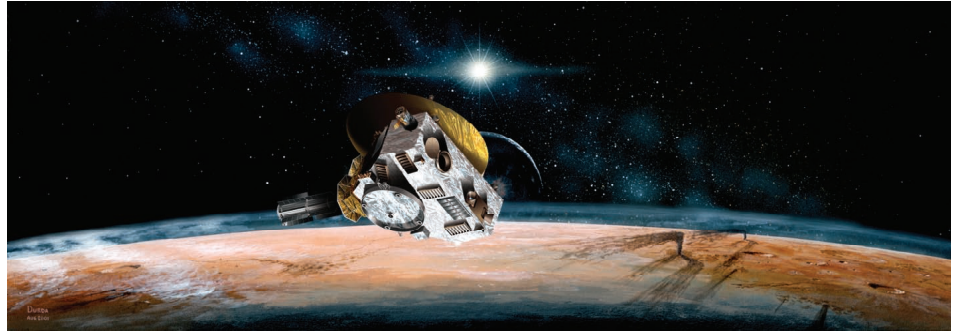
Now is an exciting time for space enthusiasts. In the history of the Space Age, there have never been so many missions “out there” at once. NASA has, for example, robots on Mars, satellites orbiting Mars, a spacecraft circling Saturn, probes en route to Pluto and Mercury—and four spacecraft, the two Voyagers and the two Pioneers, are exiting the solar system altogether.

It’s wonderful, but it is also creating a challenge.

The Deep Space Network that NASA uses to communicate with distant probes is becoming overtaxed. Status reports and data transmissions are coming in from all over the solar system—and there’s only so much time to listen. Expanding the network would be expensive, so it would be nice if these probes could learn to communicate with greater brevity. But how?

Solving problems like this is why NASA created the New Millennium Program (NMP). The goal of NMP is to flight-test experimental hardware and software for future space missions. In 1998, for instance, NMP launched an experimental spacecraft called Deep Space 1 that carried a suite of new technologies, including a new kind of communication system known as Beacon Monitor.

The system leverages the fact that for most of a probe’s long voyage to a distant planet or asteroid or comet, it’s



This artist’s concept shows the New Horizons spacecraft during its planned encounter with Pluto and its moon, Charon. The spacecraft is currently using the Beacon Monitor system on its way to Pluto. Credit: Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory/Southwest Research Institute (JHUAPL/SwRI)

not doing very much. There’s little to report. During that time, mission scientists usually only need to know whether the spacecraft is in good health.

“If you don’t need to transmit a full data stream, if you only need some basic state information, then you can use a much simpler transmission system,” notes Henry Hotz, an engineer at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory who worked on Beacon Monitor for Deep Space 1. So instead of beaming back complete data about the spacecraft’s operation, Beacon Monitor uses sophisticated software in the probe’s onboard computer to boil that data down to a single “diagnosis.” It then uses a low-power antenna to transmit that diagnosis as one of four simple radio tones, signifying “all clear,” “need some attention whenever you can,” “need attention soon,” or “I’m in big

trouble—need attention right now!”

“These simple tones are much easier to detect from Earth than complex data streams, so the mission needs far less of the network’s valuable time and bandwidth,” says Hotz. After being tested on Deep Space 1, Beacon Monitor was approved for the New Horizons mission, currently on its way to Pluto, beaming back a simple beacon as it goes.

Discover more about Beacon Monitor technology, as well as other technologies, on the NMP Technology Validation Reports page, <http://nmp-techval-reports.jpl.nasa.gov>.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

July Meeting Notes

Joel Cohen, Acting Secretary

June 1, 2007, Seagrave Observatory

John Kocur gave a Powerpoint presentation on the Skyscrapers trip to Arizona. Highlights of the trip were Senora Desert sunsets, desert vistas, desert wildflowers, cactus, birds, and wildlife, Tombstone wild west town, Bisbee Queen Mine, Kartchner Caverns, Colossal Caves, Pima Air and Space Museum, Flandreau Science Center at the University of Arizona, Kitt Peak National Observatory, Starizona astronomy equipment store, and Sedona. John took many photos and gave detailed descriptions of these key attractions.

Abbreviated Business Meeting called to order at 8:40 PM

Motion to accept May Secretary report as published

Motion was accepted by the majority

Motion to accept June secretary report as published

Motion was accepted by the majority

Motion to accept June Treasurer report as published

Motion was accepted by the majority

New Business: No new memberships
Motion to approve \$450 for bug extermination.

Old Business: Motion to approve \$300 for the purchase of picnic tables. Motion was accepted by the majority. • Motion to approve the purchase of an LCD projector lamp. Motion was tabled until further information was available.

Good of the Organization: Side Walk Astronomy Sign Up with Joe Sarandrea July 28th • Building Expansion Committee meeting July 19th. • Observatory Committee meeting July 14th, • Rick Lynch presented "Funny Money."

Adjournment followed by clean up and observing 9:00 PM

Treasurer's Report

4/1/2007 - 7/22/2007

Jim Crawford, Treasurer

INFLOWS	
Anniversaryinc	1248.00
cookoutinc	442.00
Collationdonation	41.00
Other donation	75.00
TOTAL donation	116.00
Dues	
Contributing	881.00
Family	670.00
Junior	10.00
Regular	1120.00
Senior	110.00
TOTAL dues	2791.00
Interest Inc	11.06
Astronomymaginc	230.00
skytelmagincome	296.55
TOTAL magincome	526.55
Starparty	112.00
TOTAL INFLOWS	5246.61
OUTFLOWS	
Uncategorized	38.50
Anniversaryexp	2270.12
Fuel	20.00
collation	150.00
Cookoutexp	650.00
Corporationfee	30.00
Meals & Entertn	100.00
Astronomymagexp	136.00
Skytelexp	272.59
Other	126.95
membersubscriptions	
TOTAL	535.54
membersubscriptions	
Misc	94.60
Portajohn	35.00
Postage and Delivery	36.17
Trusteexp	490.71
Utilities	
Electric	37.97
Propane	423.15
TOTAL Utilities	461.12
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	4911.76
OVERALL TOTAL	334.85

Minutes of the Meeting. Monday. August 1st,
at the Ladd Observatory.

The minutes of the July 6th. meeting were read and approved. A report on current articles on the next eclipse was submitted. Members not present at the last meeting were requested to vote on subjects they desired to study. At the July meeting, 11 votes were cast for the study of constellations, 5 for meteors, and 7 for telescope making. A suggestion was made that we devote one meeting to the study of the spectroscope.

Four new members were admitted to the society.
Mrs. Frank Sherman, Mrs. Ewald Bonjour,
Miss Eleanor Lowe, and Miss Frances Lynch.

The secretary requested that dues be paid.

Prof. Smiley lectured on the coming eclipse of August 31st.

Notes on the lecture.

An eclipse may be seen from a given place on the average of once in 360 years! There are more solar eclipses than lunar eclipses but one half of the world can see an eclipse of the moon and only a few people can see each solar eclipse. The next four eclipses in the U.S. will be

July 9, 1945.)	these two will be too
June 30, 1954.)	near sunrise.
October 1959.)	Providence near center.
July 20, 1963.)	Favorable- 5.40 p.m.
)	lasting 70 seconds.

At sunrise the shadow of the moon will just strike the earth.

Prof. Smiley showed us an old book printed many years ago, and titled, Canon der Finsterniss. A most interesting old book but many of the maps are inaccurate because only 3 points were plotted for each, and many waves were missed.

A new book published in 1931 is all wrong on the next eclipse.

Our sun and our moon seem the same size.

An annular or ring eclipse happens more often than a total eclipse.

The length of the moon's shadow varies from 228,000 to 236,000 miles.

If the planes of the orbits were the same eclipses would happen at a new and full moon, but the tilt is such that they happen only occasionally.

In 1930, astronomers had calculated where the moon was within a half mile. The moon's shadow moves at the rate of 2, 100 miles per hour.

The next eclipse will be total over a one hundred mile strip. It will be partial for 2000 miles and will last 100 seconds.

7'40" is the longest time possible for a total eclipse.

An article on the eclipse will appear in Science in about 2 weeks.

There was an article in Science News in Science on June 24th.

Prof. Smiley explained his troubles in getting hair springs and silvered mirrors ready for the next eclipse.

He said he appreciated Joshua's making the sun stand still, when he attempted to devise clock work for his long camera to keep it moving with the sun on Aug. 31st.

He advised those going north to avoid U.S. route one around Boston on that date because of the crowds. He asked that all motorists turn off their headlights as they spoil photographs being taken.

The Brown U. group will go to Camp Katedon^{ahdin}, at West Bridgton, Maine.

Members were advised to have a program. To save their eyes for the twenty minutes preceding the eclipse.

Notice whether the shadow bands move. Note the peculiar coloring of the landscape. The atmosphere is like that before a storm or cyclone. Note Bailey's beads, when light shine's thru the mts. of moon.

Should an amateur attempt to observe scientifically? He may take his choice, where a professional astronomer must.

Advised 20"-30" focal length for long focus.

Short exposure for pictures of the corona. Small aperture.

Astronomers always tell hard luck stories during eclipse, of rain, cows, etc. Walter Densmore told good luck story of eclipse in Mexico when sky cleared for a half hour for only time in 3 weeks! A Saros is an 18 year period known to the ancient Mesopotamian and Chaldean astronomers, as the time between eclipses. They calculated eclipses in advance by this.

18 years 10 and one third days. Not exact for any one spot on the earth.

Shadow bands appear about 10 minutes before totality. Place a white sheet on the ground. You can see shadow better from hill but bad chance for clouds.

Crescents seen on ground.

Pleasant Mt. near West Bridgton on Maine line a good place to go if not too crowded. Rev. Crawford told of star maps - Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. will furnish maps of the northern hemisphere for 20 cents. Chart no. 2100.

He brought with him a poster on the eclipse put out by the New Haven R.R.

At the executive meeting, Prof. Smiley suggested an evening to watch the Perseids around Aug. 12th. - from beach chairs on lawn of observatory.

Minutes of the meeting. Aug. 15th. 8.35 p.m.
Ladd Observatory, Brown University.
Instructions were given for the observation of the eclipse. Observers were instructed to watch for shadow bands on sheet and to put observations on paper.
Reports were given on meteors seen Aug. 12, 13, and 14.

Mrs. Sherman	11.30-12.00	Friday A.M.	6
Mr. Euart, Jr.)	1.00- 3.30	Friday A.M.	110
Mr. Euart, Sr.)			
at	1.00- 1.30		11
Neutaconkanut	1.30- 2.00		18
Hill	2.00- 2.30		17
(complete	2.30- 3.00		34
horizon)	3.00- 3.30		30

Mr. Huddy	8.10	Thursday	1
		very large	
		in N.W.	

Mr. Newmarker.	4.10- 4.40	Sat.	15
	4.40- 4.55	Sat.	4

Miss Petty	12.35-12.45	Fri.	5
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Mr. Hagar	3.15- 4.00	Fri.S.S.W.	1.
		In horizontal	
		path.Track last-	
		ed after meteor	
		nucleous burned	
		out.	

Rev. Crawford.	1.30-2.00	Fri.	13
	3.15-4.00	Fri.	
		Same as Mr. Hagar.	

Dr. Smiley	12.08-12.38	Fri.	13
	12.43- 1.13	Fri.	24
	11.30-12.00	Fri.	16

Evening meteors are sluggish, and red in color. Morning meteors are fast and white in color. This is due to rear end or head on collision. Speed and temperature: In the morning we see not only the meteors coming head on but the meteors we overtake. Meteor trails go backward to a single point.

Roll call was taken on plans for the eclipse. Mr. Patton spoke on the shadow bands. He used beaver board 4'x 5' with horizontal graduated. ~~XX~~ lines.

Shadow bands were 2 -3 inches apart and 1- 1 ar lhalf inches wide. Number per sec. 6 - 10 over one line. Arcs nearly straight. 2 and 1/2 minutes after totality. Suns light decreased 26 minutes before totality.

Mr. Huddy will observe effect on radio signals.

Observers were advised to lay out lines with yard sticks N. and S., E. and W.

Dean Currier spoke.
Mr. Hagar said that the shadow bands shimmered a few seconds before totality.
We were advised to save our eyes for the corona.
Mrs. Sherman saw smoke from chimney come and go

The parties were advised to take back roads and to start at 3.00 A.M.

Mr. Sherman said there were few fogs at Provincetown in early September.

Pictures of past eclipses were shown.

The minimum corona varies as sun spot maximum cycle.
At spot maximum there are uniformly few rays.

Prof. Smiley requested that someone discover a comet. Polish expedition coming to cooperate with Brown party. They got the time of

totality to hundredths of seconds.

Notices of all meetings are to be sent to the Providence papers. Mr. Huddy is to be publicity manager.
Mr. Prentice spoke on the 1925 eclipse. Subject of the next meeting will be the eclipse on Wed. Sept. 7th. unless changed.

(Changed to Tues. Sept. 6th. at Manning Hall. Notices sent at once on receiving call from Prof. Smiley Sat. afternoon.)

Prof. Eddington of England will speak at Cambridge Sept. 8th. Notices were sent to members about securing tickets.

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Total						\$

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 Make checks payable to: Skyscrapers, Inc.

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 Portsmouth, RI 02871

Directions to Seagrave Memorial Observatory

From the Providence area:

Take Rt. 6 West to Interstate 295 in Johnston and proceed west on Rt. 6 to Scituate. In Scituate bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right onto Rt. 116 North. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

From Coventry/West Warwick area:

Take Rt. 116 North. Peeptoad Road is the first left after crossing Rt. 101.

From Southern Rhode Island:

Take Interstate 95 North. Exit onto Interstate 295 North in Warwick (left exit.) Exit to Rt. 6 West in Johnston. Bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right on Rt. 116. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

From Northern Rhode Island:

Take Rt. 116 South. Follow Rt. 116 thru Greenville. Turn left at Knight's Farm intersection (Rt. 116 turns left) and follow Rt. 116. Watch for Peeptoad Road on the right.

From Connecticut:

- Take Rt. 44 East to Greenville and turn right on Rt. 116 South. Turn left at Knight's Farm intersection (Rt. 116 turn left) and follow Rt. 116. Watch for Peeptoad Road on the right.
- Take Rt. 6 East toward Rhode Island; bear left on Rt. 101 East and continue to intersection with Rt. 116. Turn left; Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

From Massachusetts:

Take Interstate 295 South (off Interstate 95 in Attleboro.) Exit onto Rt. 6 West in Johnston. Bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right on Rt. 116. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.



47 PEEPTOAD ROAD
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