

The Skyscraper

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the monthly publication of



The Amateur Astronomical Society of Rhode Island

47 Peepload Road
North Scituate, RI 02857

www.theskyscrapers.org

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See back page for directions to Seagrave Observatory.

Please submit items for the newsletter by August 15 to Jim Hendrickson, 1 Sunflower Circle, North Providence, RI 02911 or e-mail to jim@distantgalaxy.com

Email subscriptions:

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The Skyscraper

August 2003

August Meeting: Mars Now

Friday August 8, 7:30pm at Seagrave Observatory

The speaker for our August 8th meeting will be Richard Trombley from the Mars Society. He will be speaking on "Mars Now," giving us a brief history of Mars and Mars related research. He will then give us reasons why we should be on Mars now focusing on recent discoveries of water and opportunities for human colonization. He will also talk about how Mars offers answers into the formation of life on our own planet and how it could hold the potential for humankind's first step towards the stars.

Richard is the current president of the New England chapter of the Mars Society and is a freelance journalist focusing on business and technology. He is the past editor of the Berkshire Beacon and lives in western Massachusetts.

Skyscrapers Calendar

Public observing is held every Saturday at Seagrave Observatory.

August 2 Saturday	8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory
August 8 Friday	7:30pm Monthly Meeting at Seagrave Observatory
August 9 Saturday	8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory
August 16 Saturday	8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory
August 23 Saturday	8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory
August 30 Saturday	8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory

President's Message

Dan Lorraine, President

Congratulations to Steve Hubbard, Dolores and Ken Rinaldi, Pat Landers, and Ted Ferneza for a terrific job with this year's Skyscrapers cookout. We had about 75 guests consume great quantities of food while enjoying the company of fellow astronomy enthusiasts. A special thanks to Al Hall who masterminded the restoration project on the 8.25" Alvan Clark refractor which is now restored as close to its original condition as possible. Al had some assistance from Bob Horton and Ted Ferneza.

On Saturday July 26 we had the "mother of all work sessions" with great attendance and results! Wood preservative was applied to the club house, the observatory deck, the ante room (adjacent to the Clark building), and the twin roll-off roof observatory which houses the 12" Meade and Patton telescopes. Thanks to Steve Hubbard, Ken Dore, Rick Arnold, Bill Kirby, Bob Howe, Marian Juskov, Dave Dixon, Jack Szelka, Ray

Bettencourt, Dave Hurdis, and Dave Huestis for all of your help!!

Astro-Assembly has come together quite nicely under 2nd VP Bob Horton's direction. This year it will be a two day event starting Friday evening with approximately 8 talks scheduled to take place under the tent and talks scheduled for all day on Saturday. As a special treat, the Antique Telescope Society will hold a regional get together for their members at Astro-Assembly, displaying many antique and vintage telescopes including Clark, Brashear, a Porter Garden Telescope, several Unitron models, and others. This will be the best Astro-Assembly in many, many years – you don't want to miss it! So register early because the response will be larger than normal and we'd like as many of our members to show up in support of this event and the Society.

Lastly, if you haven't been out to Seagrave lately on a clear Saturday night, plan on stopping by. Turnout has been strong and we're actually starting to get some clear skies. And don't forget about Mars this summer ... it will be closer to the Earth than it's been in thousands of years!

Mooned-Out Meteor Shower

David A Huestis, Historian

We can't seem to catch a break with the usually good and reliable Perseid meteor shower. Not only has the weather prevented us from viewing this once great shooting star display in past years, but lately even the shower itself appears to be on the decline.

This year is no exception as far as observing conditions are concerned, for the Perseids peak on the night of the Full Moon, August 12/13!! You know, normally I would recommend that you find something else to occupy your time that night, but I for one need a meteor shower fix. Glaring moonlight is going to wash out all but the brightest of the Perseid members, but at least we will see a few. That is, of course, if the shower doesn't fizzle like it did last year with some of the fewest numbers in recent memory.

The shower is expected to peak before midnight, but unfortunately the Full Moon will wash out all but the brightest members of this shower. If the radiant point (the constellation Perseus) for the Perseid shower were somewhere else in the sky, we might have a better chance of seeing more meteors. As it is, the radiant rises off the northeast horizon, the same general direction of the rising Full Moon.

In spite of this very much less than favorable prospect for the Perseids, I for one am still going to go out and see how many I

can observe under these awful conditions. It will better prepare me for those future showers when I tell you to definitely stay inside and read a book!

Also, regardless of the bright interfering moonlight, you still want to maximize your observing opportunities by choosing a dark site from which to observe. Get comfortable in a lounge chair, face northeast, protect yourself with mosquito repellent, and enjoy the show. Once the Moon gets in your eyes you'll want to watch somewhere in the sky away from the moon. Even try to block the moon from direct vision using a building if you can.

Normally the Perseid shower produces about 60 meteors per hour at peak, but in recent years that number had risen to 120 or so per hour. Last year the numbers were only about 30 per hour at peak. With the bright Moon flooding the sky with light, I can hazard a guess that only 10 to 15 meteors per hour will be seen. Perseids are usually green, red or orange. Fireballs, brilliant and exploding meteors, have been more frequent as well. The Perseids are really fast shooting stars too, coming in at around 134,222 miles per hour. Stay alert and be ready to duck!

Good luck with the August shower of stardust. Keep your eyes to the skies.

Secretary's Report

Bob Napier, Secretary

Monthly Meeting

July 12, 2003

The Skyscrapers' Annual Cookout started at 4:00 PM under excellent weather conditions. President Dan Lorraine thanked Steve Hubbard, Dolores Rinaldi and Pat Landers for their work in making the cookout a success. Rick Lynch, Rich Arnold, Ted Ferneza, et. al., prepared the grounds for a comfortable outdoors environment. There were perhaps more than 50 members and their guests in attendance. The monthly speaker started at 7:20 PM. The monthly business meeting commenced at 9:20 PM.

INTRODUCTIONS: Officers, Trustees and Visitors.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Accepted as published in the Skyscraper.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Accepted as published in the Skyscraper.

TRUSTEES' Report: Trustee Ted Ferneza reported that the doors were replaced on the Clark dome; the Clark telescope was restored by Al Hall, Bob Horton and Dan Lorraine; there is a telescope on a "dolly" that has been donated to Skyscrapers and will potentially be used for the Boy Scouts camp ground observing sessions in Burrillville; work remaining to be done on the property, mainly staining/preserving the deck, buildings shingles and Clark done brickwork - a work party is scheduled for July 26 and at least 15 - 20 people will be needed to help with all the work. Trustee Rich Arnold cleared out some of the junk pile in the back of the property.

HISTORIAN/LIBRARY/PRESERVATION: Dave Huestis said they have had two meetings so far for organizing the historical documents and items; no more meetings are presently scheduled; some items will be put on the web site for all to view.

ASTRO-ASSEMBLY: Bob Horton reported on progress for AA schedule for the Oct. 3 weekend. This year's focus will be on Mars - observing, drawing and exploration. Friday night will feature at least a half dozen talks of about 20 minutes each. A 20' X 45' tent will be set up for the display of antique telescopes and instruments. The Antique Telescope Society may display some of their antique telescopes...perhaps even a Porter Garden Telescope of the 1920's. Tentative menu for the AA Buffet Rolls&butter, fruit tray, antipasto salad, Boneless chicken w/gravy, roast turkey, Swedish meatballs, oven roasted potatoes, vegetable, pastry, and coffee tentative price \$16/pp. If there are too many attendees, parking may be a problem - Dan Lorraine will check with the possibility of parking at the "horse farm" on Peeptoad Rd.

NEW BUSINESS: Three new membership applications were presented to the Society.

OLD BUSINESS: Three new proposed members were voted in as new members of the Society.

GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION: The next meeting date will be August 9th. It is delayed one week because of the

Stellafane convention in Springfield, VT on the Aug. 2 weekend; The Clark restoration consists of painting the tube a brick red; all brass has been polished; Al Hall has essentially rebuilt all the original Clark clock drive (reassembled original parts and machined missing parts) except for the weight drive and the governor mechanism. Al will write up a new set of operating procedures for the use of the Clark telescope with the new (original) drive mechanism. Al is setting up a Mars observing session at Wesleyan University's Van Vleck Observatory with the 20" Clark refractor sometime in August near opposition; what is purported to be Frank Seagrave's desk is set up in the anteroom of the Clark building - If someone has an old leather chair and old desk lamp, circa early 1900's, please consider donating them to finish Seagrave's "office" at the observatory. Gerry Dyck reported on his astronomy vacation and trip to the southwestern US. He visited Sunspot, NM, the Very Large Array Radio Telescope (VLA) in NM and NM Skies Lodge. He took his 17 1/2 inch Dobsonian and had 12 consecutive clear nights of observing!
Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Treasurer's Report

6/21/2003 - 7/8/2003

Inflows

Deposits	
Donations and cookout	611.00
Dues	775.00
Publications	32.95
Total deposits	1418.95
Total inflows	1418.95

Outflows

Raffle fee (AstroAssembly)	5.00
Cookout supplies	329.33
Electric	22.75
Improvements	223.80
Landscaping	40.00
Subscriptions	62.90
Propane	8.00
Start-up cash + dessert	200
Total outflows	891.78

Overall total **527.17**

Account Balances

6/20/2003

Assets

Cash and bank accounts	
Checking	4,281.96
Savings	8,023.78
Total cash and bank accounts	12,305.74
Total assets	12,305.74

Liabilities 0.00

Overall Total **\$12,305.74**

Directions to Seagrave 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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