

The Skyscraper

Vol. 30 no. 10

the monthly publication of



The Amateur Astronomical Society of Rhode Island

47 Peepthead Road
North Scituate, RI 02857

www.theskyscrapers.org

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Historian & Librarian

Dave Huestis

Editor

Jim Hendrickson 354-4906

See back page for directions to Seagrave Observatory.

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

Email subscriptions:

To receive *The Skyscraper* by email, send email with your name and address to jim@distantgalaxy.com. Note that you will no longer receive the newsletter by postal mail.

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The Skyscraper

October 2003

AstroAssembly 2003

Friday & Saturday, October 3 & 4 at Seagrave Observatory

Join us for AstroAssembly, a Skyscrapers tradition for more than a half-century. AstroAssembly is held during the first weekend of October, a weekend chosen by a previous generation of Skyscrapers for meteorological reasons—it was shown to be statistically the clearest weather of the year. This year will be somewhat special because we're celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Alvan Clark telescope at Seagrave Observatory. In recognition of this, the members of the Antique Telescope Society will be attending with some old glass.

Friday Night

Short Talks, Observing

Saturday

Morning & Afternoon Lectures * Antique & Vintage Telescopes * Solar Observing in H-Alpha * Day Long Swap Table * Astrophotography Competition * Telescope Making Competition * Astro-Quiz * Astro Raffle

Saturday Evening Program

Buffet Dinner * Keynote speaker, **Dr. John Mustard** from Brown University, "Planetary Exploration: The latest on the NASA missions"

Skyscrapers Calendar

Public observing is held every Saturday at Seagrave Observatory.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 3
Friday | 6:00pm AstroAssembly Friday Evening Program at Seagrave Observatory |
| October 4
Saturday | 9:00pm AstroAssembly Saturday Programs all day at Seagrave Observatory |
| | 5:30pm AstroAssembly Evening Program at St. Philips Church |
| October 11
Saturday | 8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory |
| October 18
Saturday | 8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory |
| October 25
Saturday | 8:00pm Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory |

President's Message

Dan Lorraine, President

On Saturday September 20th, 22 Skyscrapers members made the 1½-hour drive to Van Vleck Observatory in Middletown Connecticut for a night of observing Mars through the 20" Alvan Clark & Sons refractor. This instrument is one of the Clark's largest with only nine others being equal or larger in size; the largest at Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay Wisconsin is exactly double the size of Van Vleck's! Be sure to check out the photos of this field trip on the Skyscrapers web site thanks to Rick Lynch. Special thanks from Skyscrapers to Al Hall, Scott Tracey, and the Astronomical Society of Greater Hartford for hosting Skyscrapers night at Van Vleck! We're hoping to be able to do it again this winter to observe Saturn.

In October we will be setting up several dates for members that would like to be trained in the operation of the telescopes. Our team of experts includes Dave Huestis and Al Hall on the 8¼" Clark, Joel Cohen on the 12" Patton, Rick Arnold on the 12" Meade, and Bob Horton on the 16" Meade. So if you're interested keep an eye on the web site for details. If you're not on the Skyscrapers email list for periodic updates on events and reminders, please see me and I will be happy to add you.

And for all those who haven't sent in their registration it's not too late! Get it in as soon as possible and don't miss what's sure to be the best AstroAssembly ever! We've got two full days of programming, a display of antique and vintage telescopes by the Antique Telescope Society, and as always, Saturday night is capped off with our banquet, keynote speaker, and lots of raffle prizes and awards! Bob Horton has put countless hours into organizing this event, so please show your support for the club by sending in your registration (you can also register at the door) and attending AstroAssembly ... you'll be glad you did.

Catch a Falling Star

David A Huestis, Historian

Have you taken advantage of our Mars public observing program at Seagrave Observatory? It's still not too late to get a decent view of our desert neighbor.

During the last two months, hundreds of folks visited the home of Skyscrapers Inc and were treated to images of Mars we amateurs haven't seen in years! When Mars was at its closest to the Earth on August 27, anyone looking at the planet easily saw the South Polar Cap (SPC), as well as many prominent surface markings. The SPC was so large and bright you couldn't miss it.

In more recent weeks the SPC has evaporated considerably because Mars' southern hemisphere has been basking in the increasing warmth of Spring since May 5, and its summer just began on September 29. It is a bit of a challenge to discern this region of frozen carbon dioxide now. Absolutely steady seeing is required to view the now small oval, all that remains of the SPC. It may disappear entirely as the Martian summer progresses, but surface features will still remain visible if no dust storms begin. Come out and visit us every Saturday night if the weather permits. (Seagrave Observatory will be closed for public viewing on October 4.)

It has been quite some time since we've observed a decent meteor shower. The Perseids of August were once again clouded out. Fortunately two meteor showers present themselves in October. Let's see what we can expect for astronomical observing conditions.

We won't be so fortunate for the Draconid meteor shower on the night of October 8-9. The Moon will be Full on the 10th, so it will be quite bright and will be a presence in the sky practically all night. In itself this would spoil our chances of seeing the peak rate of 10 meteors per hour.

Another factor is that peak rates are also questionable this year, since the comet (Giacobini-Zinner) that produced the meteor stream made its last close approach to the Earth in 1998. We seldom get high rates this long after the comet's appearance. I'd say 2003 is a wash-out for the Draconids, though anything is possible.

The best meteor shower in October is the Orionids. Peak night this year occurs on October 21-22 with a waning crescent Moon that rises between 2:00 and 3:00 am. Moonlight will interfere a little with observing the meteors, since the best show occurs after midnight as Orion rises higher into the sky.

Regardless, an observer in a dark sky location should have no difficulty observing possibly 15-20 yellow and green meteors per hour during peak. And since October skies are usually clear and transparent, the Orionids will hopefully be seen under fairly good conditions despite the Moon's presence. Just block it from direct view with a building or something. These remnants of Halley's Comet intercept the Earth's orbit nearly head-on at 41.6 miles per second, so they are bright and are also noted for producing fireballs that create persistent dust trains high in the atmosphere. Good luck.

Earlier in the month the Full Moon of October is the Hunter's Moon, occurring on Friday, October 10 at 3:27 am EDT (Eastern Daylight Time). And speaking of EDT, on October 26 at 2:00 am, most of the US reverts back to EST (Eastern Standard Time). Don't forget the old saying: Spring ahead, Fall behind! Set your clocks back one hour before retiring on Saturday night (the 25th), or you'll be an hour early for everything first thing Sunday morning!!

Remember to check our web site - <http://www.theskyscrapers.org> - for further information, and always keep your eyes to the skies.

Notices

For Sale: Meade 8" LX 90 Telescope

'The Telescope of a Lifetime' For Sale - Almost New

Features include: Autostar Computer Controller w. Automatic GO TO capabilities, Nine selectable slew speeds, Rigid chromed-steel variable height tripod, double tine fork mount, is fully upgradeable, and includes three eyepieces including Standard Meade Electronic eyepiece, Super Plossl 26 mm, and 2x Teleneegative Multi coated lens.

Plus Free Delivery!

Entire package \$1500.

Please call John Hazard after 6pm at 508-636-2526 or email to jhazard@projo.com.

Volunteer Needed: Newsletter Printing & Mailing

While many members have signed up for e-newsletters on the web site, we still print and send about 80 copies by postal mail each month. Chris Harkins, who has handled the printing and mailing during the past several years, will no longer be able to do the job as of the end of this year. If you'd like to help out and take over these duties, see Jim Hendrickson and/or Pat Landers, or email jim@distantgalaxy.com.

Secretary's Report

Dan Lorraine, Acting Secretary

Executive Committee Meeting

September 13, 2003

Start 5:15pm; adjourn 7:00pm

Attendees: Dan Lorraine, Ted Ferneza, Rick Arnold, Dolores Rinaldi, Bob Horton, Dave Huestis, Al Hall, Steve Hubbard, Joel Cohen

The motor on the 12" Patton scope is not working. Rick Arnold and Joel Cohen removed it after the Executive Committee meeting and Rick will bring it for servicing.

Both of the antiquated 3-gun projectors that are sitting in the meeting hall will be removed and offered at AstroAssembly to anyone that wants them (the lenses in them may be of interest to someone). If there are no takers we will have to pay to have them disposed of since they contain hazardous material.

The 12" Meade is working exceptionally well with no chatter from the drive. It was decided not to open it up at this time.

The Alvan Clark is experiencing some "back lash" while the drive is engaged; Al Hall will make some adjustments to minimize.

Rick Lynch asked for a complete set of keys to the observatory and it was unanimously approved.

Dan Lorraine will review our insurance policy to make sure we have adequate coverage on the property and equipment.

We will set up training sessions for members that are interested in learning how to use the clubs telescopes – more details to follow. Training manuals will be written up: The Patton scope, Joel Cohen; the 12" Meade, Rick Arnold; the 16" Meade, Bob Horton, and the Clark refractor, Al Hall. A certificate will be created for those members that are certified on the scopes and they will be awarded at the monthly meetings.

We will belt sand and paint the large observatory ladder that is currently in the basement before AstroAssembly.

There will be a work session the weekend of September 27 to prepare the facility for AA and construct a shield so we can use the projector outside under the tent for the Saturday talks.

Volunteers were solicited from the Executive Committee to bring pastry and donuts to the Friday evening and the Saturday morning sessions of AstroAssembly.

Al Hall is looking into making some Skyscrapers mugs for AstroAssembly – the Hartford group had some made for Star-Conn and they sold very well. The cost is approximately \$1.25/mug.

Many other details surrounding AstroAssembly were discussed.

Members workshop schedule will be discussed and finalized after AstroAssembly.

Bob Horton will try to finalize the details for a Skyscrapers trip to the Hartness House Inn for a weekend of observing in late October/early November.

Chris Harkins asked to be replaced as the printer and mailer of the Skyscraper monthly newsletter – a volunteer will be sought to replace him.

Plans for the Ante room were discussed and it was decided to keep one half as an office setting the way it was set up in Frank Seagraves' day, with a his original desk, book cases, etc. The other half would somehow be set up to show Skyscrapers History and detail the activities of the club.

Dan Lorraine donated the DVD set "From Earth to the Moon" to the member's loaner library. This is the HBO mini-series done by Tom Hanks and written by Andy Chaikin.

Treasurer's Report

8/16/2003 – 9/18/2003

Income

Deposits	
Donations	268.00
Dues & newsletter	445.00
Publications	98.85
Total deposits	811.85
Total income	811.85

Expenses

Reimbursement *	368.30
*	559.44
Materials *	52.46
Cookout (porta john)	100.00
Electric	64.58
Landscaping	80.00
Subscriptions	98.85
Office	55.74
Propane	8.56
Total expenses	1387.93

Overall total	(96.12)
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Account Balances : 9/17/2003

Assets

Cash and bank accounts	
Checking	3,890.88
Savings	8,033.67
Total cash and bank accounts	11,924.55
Total assets	11,924.55

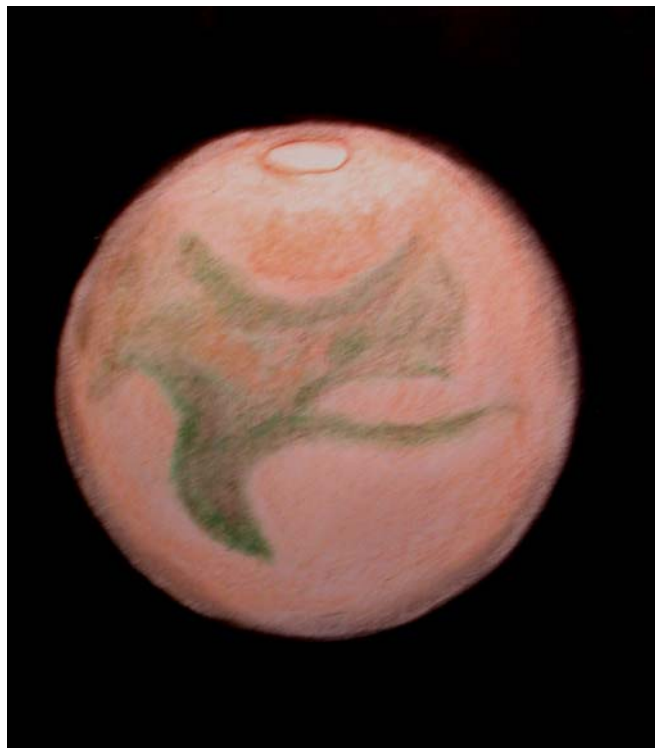
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Overall Total	\$11,924.55
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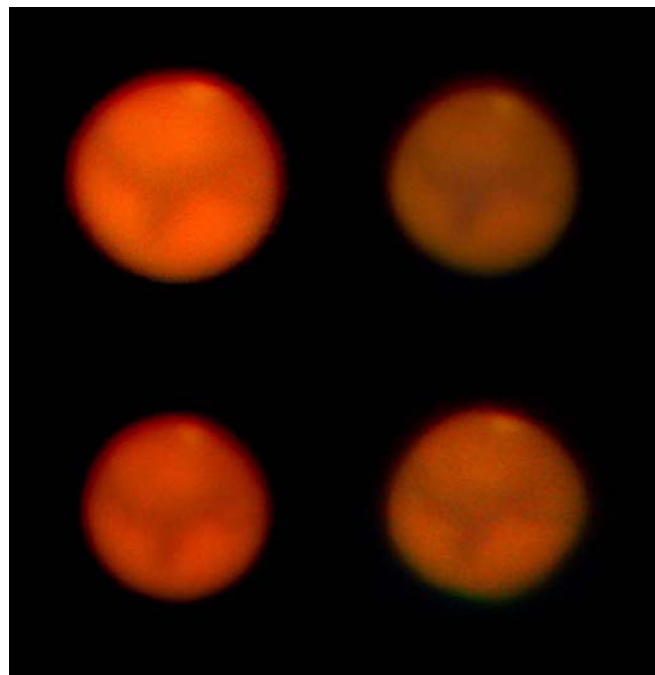
* Materials & Reimbursement include :

Ink & name tags, newsletter postage and printing, membership applications, AstroAssembly flyers, AstroAssembly tents, keys, paint materials, plane ticket for Greg Mort (AstroAssembly speaker), caulking, lights

Mars Gallery



Bob Horton made this sketch of Mars while observing through the Alvan Clark telescope on September 7, 2003.



This series of images was taken by Bob Horton using a digital camera placed behind the eyepiece of the Alvan Clark telescope on September 6, 2003.



Skyscrapers Field Trip to Van Vleck Observatory

On Saturday, September 20, several members made a trek to our neighboring state of Connecticut to visit Van Vleck Observatory at Wesleyan University in Middletown.

More than 20 members attended Skyscrapers night at Van Vleck Observatory, organized by Al Hall and the Astronomical Society of Greater Hartford.

For more photos of recent happenings at Skyscrapers, see the web site at www.theskyscrapers.org

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
NORTH SCITUATE, RI 02857**