

MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED. There will be further discussion of the May meeting, whether to have a dinner followed by election of officers, or regular lecture and business meeting. Also, plans for observing meteors at the next shower.

METEORITES AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

The most important meteorite collection in the country is right here in Washington, proudly claims Dr. E. P. Henderson, curator of the meteorite section at the National Museum.

Some of these meteorites have very odd shapes as well as peculiar surface features. Among the oddities is the Tucson iron shaped like a ring. The origin of this ring has never been fully explained. It was known for centuries, and used as an anvil at Puerta de los Muchados, a pass in the Santa Rita Mountains 30 miles southeast of Tucson. Its odd shaped companion was carried to California by the early pioneers who used it as an anvil. The meteorite was later acquired by the California Society of Pioneers and eventually sold to the Smithsonian Institution.

Not all of the collection is on view. A large office upstairs is lined with drawers containing small pieces. Dr. Henderson does not know the monetary value of the collection but says it is very high. The purchase price of each item depends to some degree on the individual buyer. The Museum already may have similar stones from the same fall, or a better one than is being offered. The piece offered may have peculiar structure and therefore be desirable to the collector. The cost varies from about ten cents a pound to several dollars per gram.

(More later. Ed.)

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National Capital
Amateur Astronomers Association
Washington, D.C.

March 1945

Vol. 2, No. 7

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A KEY TO THE UNIVERSE will be the subject of an illustrated lecture by Mr. Morgan Cilley at the meeting on Saturday, March 3, 8 p.m. at the National Museum.

Mr. Cilley who is now at the U.S. Naval Observatory, holds the degree of C.E., and is a life member of the American Society of Civil Engineers. He is also a member of long standing in the American Astronomical Society and the American Association of Variable Star Observers. He was a Regional Advisor of the AAVSO 1930-38 and has been on the Council since 1942. His private observatory near White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., is equipped with a 10-inch Newtonian reflector, a 3 1/2-inch refractor, and other instruments including an engineer's theodolite, clocks, and radio time receiver.

An authoritative and comprehensive account of variable stars will be found in the book by Leon Campbell and Luigi Jacchia, "The Story of Variable Stars," one of the Harvard Books on Astronomy.

---Edgar W. Woolard

AT THE LAST MEETING, Maj. U. S. Lyons gave an inspiring lecture on "What We Learn from the Sun." Due to the war, sun spot observations have been greatly reduced and the object of the lecture was to recruit observers for Harvard Observatory. This is another field of astronomy where the amateur is useful.

One needs a reflecting telescope or pair of binoculars for this work. Noon is the best time to observe. Project the image of the sun on white paper and count or draw the spots. Make a daily record of your observations and send them to Harvard Observatory, Cambridge, Mass.

Although Galileo is believed to have been the first to observe sun spots, in 1610, Wolff, a Swiss, began a systematic count of them in 1815. He was able to extend this count as far back as 1749, or 66 years prior to his own observations. It was then taken up by Wolfer, followed by Brunner. In 1894 the Naval Observatory included sun spot counts in its program and in 1898 Peters began to photograph the spots. He observed at noon and kept daily records of the number counted.

In 1927 at the international astronomical meeting, it was decided to measure the plates. By measuring, the area and position of the spots on the sun were obtained. Greenwich Observatory and the Observatory of the Cape of Good Hope were among those cooperating with the Naval Observatory. Mt. Wilson is the only observatory working with it at present. Mt. Wilson sends data to Washington twice a month and the final results are published in the "Monthly Weather Review."

Major Lyons showed pictures of a group of spots taken day by day to reveal how they rotate. A group is composed of two parts--the leader and follower. The leader is more prominent and at the time of a magnetic storm, breaks up. Spots rotate from east to west and have two parts, the umbra and penumbra.

Most of them appear on the sun's surface between 15° and 35° latitude. Not many are north of 45°, and are rarely observed on the equator. A cycle of spots begins at a high latitude and travels toward the equator. Most spots will last one rotation of the sun, or about 25 days.

At present the Naval Observatory is using the spectrohelioscope from Cook Observatory, University of Pennsylvania.

---Edith F. Reilly

PERSONALS

Mr. C. A. Little, 1808 W Street S.E., is now one of our members and we cordially welcome him.

We also extend a friendly hand to the budding astronomers who are not yet eligible to join our august body.

Mr. E. C. Stanton who suffered a stroke of paralysis December 2d, is now able to sit up part of the day and is improving gradually. We missed him but were not aware of the cause until recently. We extend our sincere wishes for his complete recovery.

Mr. Stephen A. Nagy, former president of the NCAAA, is with us again after a long absence in Chicago.

Miss Edith Reilly, contributor this month, is an ardent meteor observer from Flower Observatory in Philadelphia. She is now at the Naval Observatory and we hope she will start a group among us in parallax work.

HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY class will meet at Dr. Woolard's home on March 19th at 7:30 p.m.