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# ★ STARDUST



APRIL 1968

Vol. XXV No. 8

## A METEORITE ODYSSEY

Every day, something like  $10^8$  meteors enter the earth's atmosphere. Most of these are vaporized completely by the high entry temperatures, but a small fraction are sufficiently massive to survive their fiery plunge; these may often be found and recognized by a careful rock collector. Meteorites of course carry useful clues as to the composition of matter in interplanetary space, and to the age and origin of the solar system.

Dr. Edward P. Henderson, a curator at the Smithsonian Institution, and well-known authority on meteorites, will describe the field work involved in obtaining, identifying, and studying meteorites, as well as summarizing the knowledge gleaned to date from these fascinating intruders. Dr. Henderson's emphasis on field work, and the techniques for recognizing meteorites, will be of interest to amateurs who would like to take up this activity, where they can make a worthwhile contribution to science.

Dr. Henderson has been associated with the Smithsonian Institution throughout most of his career. He received his PhD in astronomy from Bern University in 1963.

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### CALENDAR

- APRIL 6----- 6:15 p.m. Dinner with the speaker. Bassin's, at the corner of 14th & Penn. N.W. Call Jerry Hudson 948-2809 to make reservations.
- 6----- 8:15 p.m. A METEORITE ODYSSEY. Dr. Edward P. Henderson, Smithsonian Institution. Departmental Auditorium. Followed by regular business meeting.
- 13----- 8:15 p.m. Discussion Group. Dept. of Commerce, Rm. 2062. Mr. John Stolarik, former president of N.C.A. will describe a recent trip to Norway with N.A.S.A. and experiments conducted there with releases of barium into the upper atmosphere.
- 6----- GENERAL MEETING OF JUNIOR DIVISION at 7:30 P.M. in the Dept. of Commerce auditorium. All Juniors are urged to attend.
- 14 (?)---- JUNIOR DIVISION ASTRONOMY CLASS. Sunday afternoon at 3 P.M. in the Planetarium of the Montgomery Junior College. Call Mark Goldberg 933-0823 to confirm date.
- 2,9,16,23,30--- TELESCOPE MAKING CLASS at Chevy Chase Community Center at 7:30 with Hoy Walls.

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PLEASE NOTE THAT THE APRIL MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE DEPARTMENTAL AUDITORIUM

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THE EARLY DAYS OF THE NAVAL OBSERVATORY (MARCH LECTURE)

In 1825, President John Quincy Adams first went before Congress to plead for support of his "lighthouses of the sky". He was distressed that there was not a single astronomical observatory in all of America. There were grave doubts that Congress had the authority to establish such an institution, and for many years Adams' appeals for a national observatory went unheeded. Finally, in 1842, Congress appropriated \$25,000 for a new and enlarged Depot of Charts and Instruments (which ultimately became the U.S. Naval Observatory) largely through the efforts of Navy Lieutenant James M. Gilliss.

Lt. Gilliss was put in charge of drawing the plans and securing the required instruments for the new observatory. While Lt. Gilliss was busy with these activities, another Navy Lieutenant by the name of Matthew F. Maury was looking for a command on land because a leg injury made sea duty impossible for him. Lt. Maury was a capable navigator and, in fact, had written an outstanding textbook on navigation. He was also quite an opportunist, and when Lt. Gilliss was in Europe purchasing telescopes, Lt. Maury managed to get himself appointed Superintendent of the new observatory by gaining favor with the right people high in the Navy and the government. (He let the President look at the moon through one of his telescopes one night!) At the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, Maury, a Virginian, resigned from his post at the observatory and joined the Confederacy. At last, the then Captain Gilliss became the superintendent of the Naval Observatory and served until his death in 1865.

The original Naval Observatory building stands on 23rd Street, Northwest opposite the Department of State. The Observatory was moved to its present site in 1893.

Our March speaker, Dr. David Musto, is preparing an article on this subject which will probably appear in a forthcoming issue of the Review of Popular Astronomy.

- Leith Holloway

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APRIL MEETING AT THE DEPARTMENTAL AUDITORIUM .....

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NEW MEMBERS

REGULAR

Miss Anne F. Walton  
601 Four Mile Rd., #4114  
Alexandria, Va. 22305

Vincent P. Zirakian  
6005 Planders St.  
Springfield, Va. 22150

JUNIOR

John Hunter  
4802 Indian Lane  
College Park, Maryland 20740

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BOB WRIGHT and FRANK CECIL ATTEND 13th ANNIVERSARY DINNER-HARRISBURG

Bob Wright, as Regional Representative of the Middle East Region of the Astronomical League along with Mr. Frank Cecil of Baltimore, Regional Treasurer, attended the 13th Anniversary Dinner of the Harrisburg Astronomical Society on Feb. 15th. After the dinner they visited the New Astronomical Park and saw their progress in building a new Observatory facility.

STARDUST, the monthly publication of the Harrisburg group carries a reprint of the paper given by our William Winkler at the 1967 AL Convention held here in Washington.

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REGIONAL CONVENTION - The Amateur Astronomers Assn. of Pittsburgh cordially invites all members to the Middle East Regional Convention to be held June 14, 15, and 16, 1968.

U.S. NAVAL OBSERVATORY COMPLETE LUNAR OCCULTATION PREDICTIONS  
FOR THE YEAR 1968 FROM STANDARD STATION # - 0 HILGES  
STANDARD STATION AT LAT. 38°59' LONG. 77°05'

Table with columns: DATE, TIME, REF, MAG, SP, PH, PERCENT, ELG, PA, CUSP, VA, MOON, SUN, ALT, LIBRATION, MEM. Includes data for occultations of stars like 224979, 204342, 204343, etc.