

OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

★ President: Edwin Lurcott

★ Treasurer: Steven Lurcott

FEBRUARY 1995

(VOLUME 3, NO.2)

★ Vice President: Mike Tucker

★ Secretary: Nancy Armstrong

CCAS FEBRUARY MEETING

DATE: **Tuesday, February 14, 1995**

TIME: 7:30 PM EST

PLACE: Planetarium (room 186)

Schmucker Science Center

West Chester University

LOCATION: South Church St. & Rosedale Ave.

West Chester, PA (see maps)

Following the business portion of the meeting, CCAS member, Emil Volcheck, will be giving a talk on "Space Travel: Is it for Real?" Emil is one of our most experienced members. He is a past president of the Delaware Astronomical Society and is presently associated with the Mt. Cuba Observatory in Delaware.

It was learned from our member survey that many CCAS members are interested in Space Exploration. Therefore, Emil's presentation should be of particular interest to the society.

All members are invited and may bring friends. Following the presentation, members may socialize over coffee. In addition, if sky conditions permit, we may use the observatory on top of Schmucker Science Center. Members must proceed as a group to the observatory where Ed Lurcott will operate and demonstrate the 12" 'scope.

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JANUARY CCAS MEETING

CCAS members were treated to a demonstration of some of the popular and informative computer programs for PC's by our vice president, Mike Tucker. Mike displayed the detailed computer produced 'night skies' (great for cloudy nights) and immense amounts of astronomical information at the click of a mouse.

We thank Mike for his time and effort to demonstrate these programs. Much was learned from this presentation.

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CCAS OBSERVING SESSION

DATE: **Friday, February 3, 1995**

RAIN DATE: **Saturday, Feb. 4, 1995**

TIME: 7:00 PM - ? EST

PLACE: Brandywine Valley Association

(location of our summer meetings)

1760 Unionville-Wawaset Road

West Chester, PA (see map)

The January observing session was completely clouded out and no session was held. One of these months we are going to get a good clear night sky. Let's hope that this is the month. All CCAS members are invited to bring guests to the February 3rd (or 4th) observing session at the Brandywine Valley Association (BVA) property on route 842 about 6 miles west of West Chester.

Saturn sets quickly after sunset. Come early if you wanted to view it. Its rings are approaching an on-edge view from Earth. The moon will also be in the west and only 4 or 5 days old. Mars rises a little after sunset and is at opposition on Feb. 12th thus will be at its largest apparent diameter this season at 13.8 arc seconds. But this is large enough to see surface markings and the polar ice cap. Most telescopic viewers will be looking at more deep-sky objects and some minor planets now visible.

A limited number of electrical outlets are available. Those bringing 'scopes may drive up the farm road to the left of the parking lot. Members not owning 'scopes are encouraged to come and enjoy the views through the 'scopes. 'Scope owners are always pleased to have others look through them. Plus, binoculars will enable you to see many objects in the sky, bring a pair!

The BVA is allowing us to use their facilities and CCAS members are reminded that we should leave the area as clean as we found it. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

DRESS WARMLY !!!

For further information call:

Connie Shapiro (296-0512) or

Ed Lurcott (436-0387)

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ORION'S SWORD

When looking about 4 degrees south of Orion's belt with binoculars or a low powered telescope one sees three clusters of stars arranged in a line north and south. The northern cluster is known as NGC 1981 and consists of 8 or 10 bright stars. The southern cluster is a loose grouping around the bright star IOTA ORIONIS at a distance of 2,000 light years in the faint nebula NGC 1980. The middle cluster is the multiple star THETA ORIONIS and is surrounded by nebulosity of the Great Orion Nebula. The 4 bright stars of Theta are known as the "Trapesium." These are very young stars(perhaps less than a million years old) and radiate a tremendous amount of energy in the form of ultra violet rays. The gases of the surrounding nebula (oxygen, helium, and nitrogen) are excited by these UV rays and cause them to emit light (fluorescence). This light then travels the 1600 light years to us.

It has long been known to be the breeding ground for new stars, some not yet visible. But, as described in the December 1994 issue of Sky & Telescope, recent images taken by the Hubble Telescope (HST) have revealed many emerging stars still enveloped in the condensing cloud of gas and dust. These are not visible in amateur 'scopes but much of the gases of the nebula present one of the most spectacular of all deep-sky objects. The bright portion of the nebula is probably 5 or 6 light years in diameter. The fainter outer portions are some 30 light years across!

Whatever viewing aid you use, it is beautiful to observe and spend time pondering its immensity.

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SKY & TELESCOPE

Those wanting to subscribe to Sky & Telescope Magazine at the group rate of \$20.00 * per year may send a check to Steve Lurcott. When he receives at least 5 checks, he will submit them to Sky & Telescope. After the initial submission, he will send requests for subscriptions as they are received from CCAS members. If you already subscribe, Sky & Telescope will extend your subscription 1 year.

*It's less than 1/2 the newsstand price(\$3.50/ issue)

ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE

CCAS has received application for membership in a national organization, the Astronomical League. Our treasurer, Steve Lurcott will submit the application with the appropriate CCAS funds to the Astronomical League. All CCAS members will then be members of the Astronomical League (AL) and will receive the quarterly publication "Reflector." CCAS will then be included in the Mid-Atlantic Region of AL.

There is much astronomical material available from AL such as: observing guides, books, slides and videos. Also available are observational incentives including certificates for observing Messier and Herschel objects with either binoculars or telescopes. Annual meetings are held at both the regional and national level which you may attend.

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OCCULTATION OF SPICA viewed by Pete LaFrance

Pete got up early on the morning of Jan. 23rd to check the sky condition. They were clear! He went out and opened his observatory roof and plugged in his C 8 'scope. First magnitude Spica was still visible just east of the 3/4 moon and closing fast. As the moon got close, Pete observed with his C8. The twilight sky between Spica and the moon got smaller and smaller until it looked as though Spica was a bright light on top of some lunar mountain. Then it was gone as if someone turned off the light (6:19AM). Pete thought, "Wow that was neat," and now he could relax a while.

The reappearance was not until 7:03 AM in brighter twilight. By that time the sky was bright but the moon was easily visible. Several minutes before the expected appearance, Pete again watched in the 'scope. Then there it was, Spica popped out on the dark side of the moon. The sky quickly brightened and the moon left Spica behind. Pete was amazed how quickly the event passed. It was his first observation of a lunar occultation of a bright star and is looking forward to another.

How many CCAS members also observed this event. Let's hear from you and learn what your impressions were.



SPRING OBSERVING SESSIONS

Observing sessions for CCAS members at the BVA property this Spring are as follows:

Feb. 3; rain date, Feb. 4

Mar. 10; rain date, Mar. 11

Apr. 7; rain date, Apr. 8

May 5; rain date, May 6

June 2; rain date, June 3

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CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY'S PURPOSES

The Chester County Astronomical Society was formed in September 1993, with the cooperation of West Chester University, as a non-profit organization dedicated to the education and enjoyment of astronomy for the general public. The society holds meetings with speakers and observing sessions once a month. Anyone who is interested in astronomy or would like to learn about astronomy is welcome to attend meetings and become a member of the society.

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The present membership rates are as follows:

REGULAR MEMBER

(18 years or older)\$20/year

SENIOR MEMBER

(65 years or older)\$10/year

STUDENT MEMBER

(full-time college student) \$ 5/year

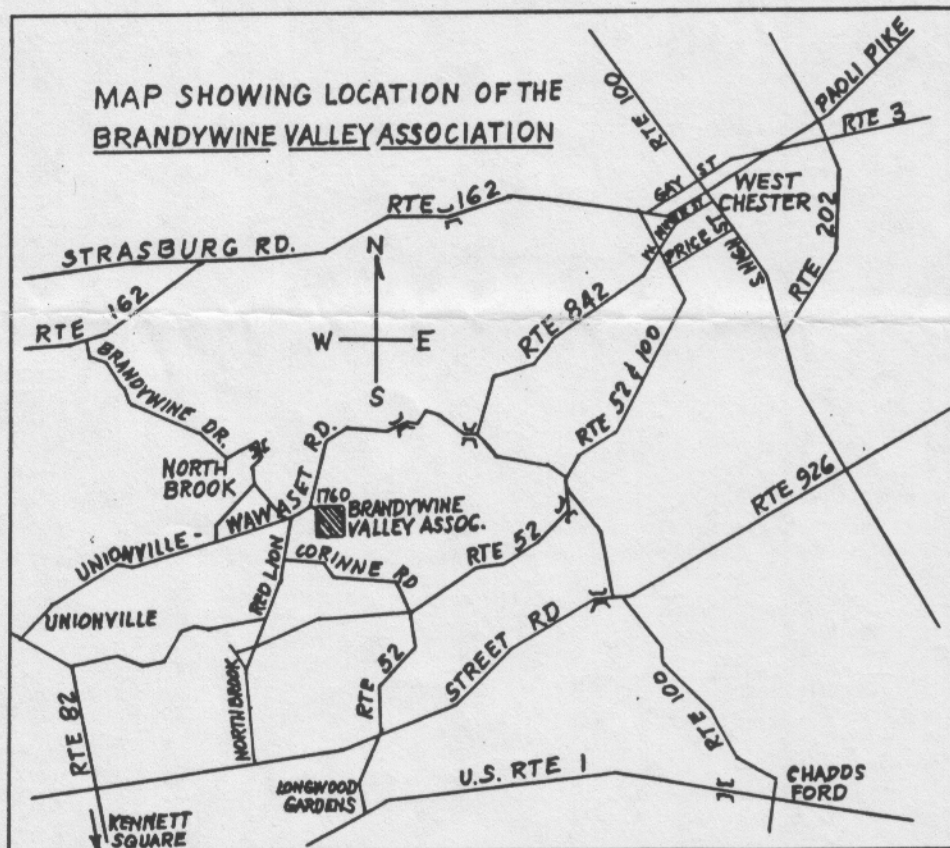
JUNIOR MEMBER

(under 18 years old)\$ 5/year

For further information on membership or society activities you may call:

President: Edwin Lurcott (610) 436-0387
Vice Pres: Mike Tucker (610) 584-8236
Treasurer: Steve Lurcott (610) 268-6943
Secretary: Nancy Armstrong (610) 873-7531
Obs Chrm: Roger Taylor (610) 430-7768
Pubic Rel: Kathy Cseke (610) 644-9543

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MAP SHOWING
LOCATION OF
SCHMUCKER SCIENCE
CENTER AT WEST
CHESTER UNIVERSITY

