



Observations

A Monthly Publication Of The
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

APRIL 2004

(VOLUME 12, NO. 4)

Visit us online at www.ccas.us

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Important April 2004 Dates

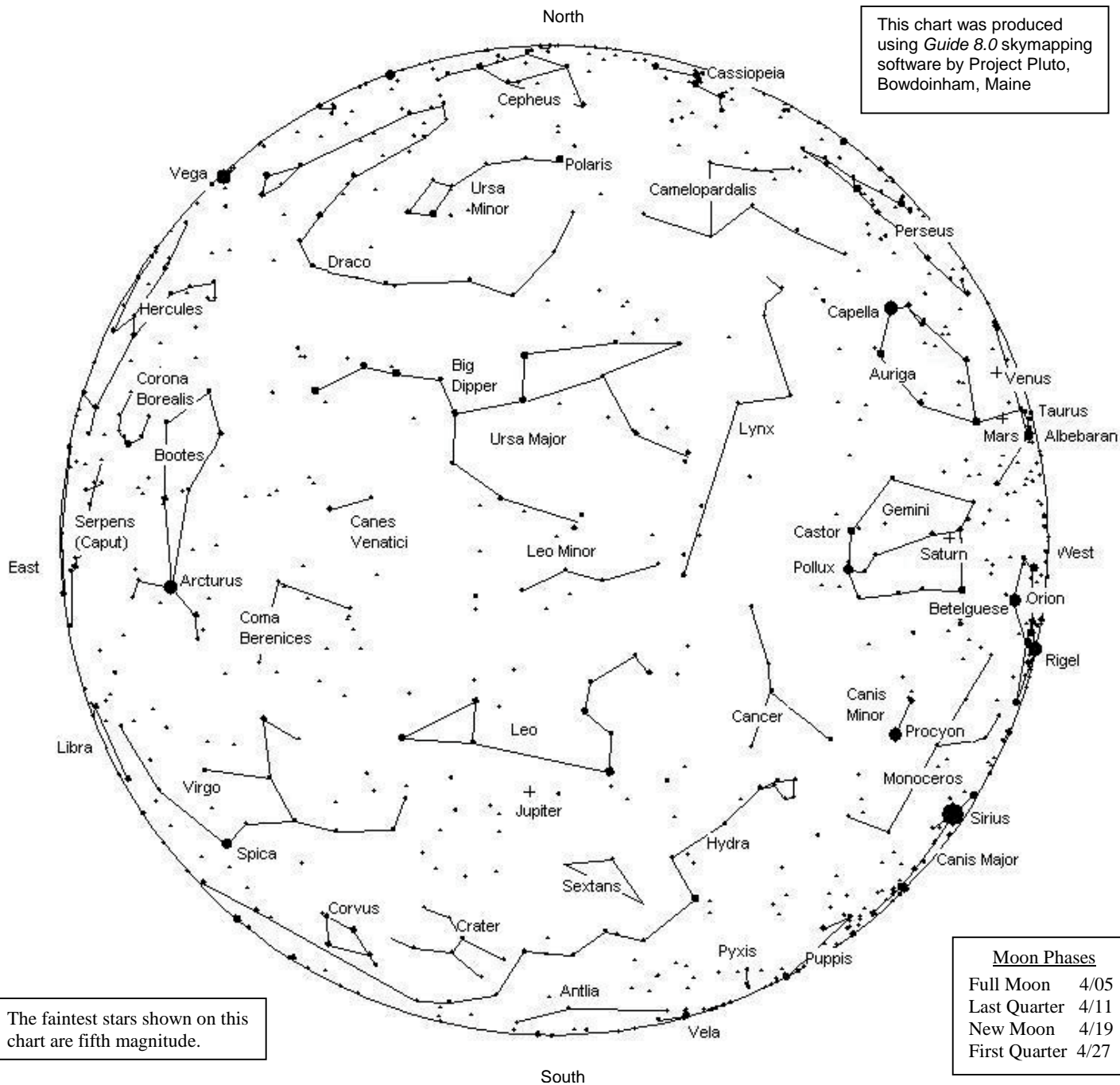
- 4** Beginning of Daylight Savings Time. Turn clocks ahead one hour.
- 5** Full Moon
- 6** CCAS Introductory Astronomy classes at the Flower and Cook Observatory in Malvern. Class begins at 7:00 p.m. EDT.
Tonight's session: "The Secret Life of Stars"
- 11** Last Quarter Moon
- 16/** CCAS Observing session at Myrick
- 17** Conservation Center (BVA) starts at sunset.
- 19** New Moon
- 20** CCAS Introductory Astronomy class **and** CCAS Monthly Meeting **at the Planetarium** at West Chester University. Starting time: **7:00 p.m.** EDT.
- 22** Lyrid meteor shower peaks in the early morning hours.
- 24** **National Astronomy Day** show at the Exton Square Mall. 10:00 a.m. EDT until ?
- 27** First Quarter Moon



Important Upcoming Observing Events in May and June

- May:** There will be two fairly bright comets in the evening sky at the same time! This is an unusual event. Comet C/2001 Q4 NEAT may possibly be visible to the naked eye, and will be visible through most of May. Comet C/2002 T7 LINEAR will be visible again briefly in the latter part of May, but will not likely be as bright as Comet C/2001 Q4 NEAT. Look for more details, including finder charts, in the May issue of *Observations*.
- June:** Venus transits the Sun (meaning that it passes between us and the Sun, and will be visible as a large black circle against the face of the Sun—using proper filters to protect your eyes, of course). This happens on the morning of June 8; for us the transit will be in progress when the Sun rises. Transits of Venus happen literally once in a lifetime; the last one was in 1882. There will be more information in May and June *Observations*.

This chart was produced using *Guide 8.0* skymapping software by Project Pluto, Bowdoinham, Maine



The sky over Chester County
 April 15, 2004 at 9:00 p.m. EDT

The Planets

Mercury is in the evening sky during the first week in April, low in the west after sunset.

Venus is in the evening sky, setting as much as 4 hours after the Sun. You can't miss it, it's the brightest "star" in the sky after dark until about 8:00 p.m. or so when it sets.

Mars is in the evening sky, in Taurus. It's a small dot in telescopes.

Jupiter is in the east in April, in Leo. You can start getting good telescopic views of Jupiter by late evening (9:00 p.m. or later).

Saturn is in Gemini in April. You can get good telescopic views of Saturn now as soon as it is dark enough to find it. The rings are nicely tipped for good viewing, and as a matter of fact, this year is one of the best years to see the rings!

Uranus is in the morning sky.

Neptune is also in the morning sky.

Pluto is in the morning sky, but is not high enough for telescopic viewing before sunrise.

CCAS April Meeting: Date and Time Changed!

Please note that the date of the April Society meeting has been changed from the usual second Tuesday of the month (April 13) to the third Tuesday of the month, April 20. This is so we could combine the meeting with the Introductory Astronomy class in the planetarium at West Chester University. This way all members can attend the planetarium show that night. The planetarium show will be first that night, after which we will hold the monthly meeting to conduct any needed Society business. Class members can leave after the show if they choose, or they can stay for the meeting.

The show will begin at 7:00 p.m.



Calling all CCAS Astrophotographers!

from Mike Turco

Update: **Please contact Mike ASAP** if you want to exhibit your astroimages at this show (contact Mike at **610-399-3423** or via e-mail at **president@ccas.us**). Mike needs to know **NOW** how many people are able to supply images for the show, and how many images there will be overall. If you want captions for your images printed on cardstock Mike will print those up for you, so the fonts are consistent, etc.—just contact Mike for this help. The photos need to be mounted at least in mats and preferably in frames, and hung with hooks and wire from the existing J-track in the building hall. Photos should be as large as possible while retaining detail.

Tentative opening date is April 9. We encourage all CCAS members and their families to attend this exhibit.

Recap of the planned show, from last month's newsletter: Mr. Ken Lehr, the head of West Goshen Parks and Recreation department, was quite impressed with the astrophotos on our website and wants to have an exhibit of astroimages at the **West Goshen Township Building** for two months (April and May). If we can do it, the plan is to have essentially an art reception at the township building to introduce the public to the photos and the photographers. Mike also suggested having the equipment set up inside, if possible, to demonstrate how, and with what, the astrophotos were taken. We would hold an observation session, weather permitting, for the public in conjunction with the reception. Mr. Lehr would publicize the event in the township newsletter (he's the editor) and via signs in parks, etc. around the township.



National Astronomy Day is Saturday April 24

We have made arrangements for the CCAS to have an exhibit at the Exton Square Mall for National Astronomy Day. The theme of Astronomy Day this year is the upcoming transit of Venus across the face of the Sun on June 8, 2004. We plan to have tables with displays and telescopes inside, and solar observing outside (if it's clear that day). **We need people to help man the tables and the outside solar telescope!** We will be there from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. You don't need to stay the whole 8 hours. Even if you can only be there for an hour that will be a big help. That will allow us to give people meal breaks or rest breaks. Also, any ideas you think of for enhancing our display

that day are most welcome. We usually start arriving at the Mall between 9:00 and 10:00 that morning to set up. We will be in the "North Court," which is outside one of the entrances to Strawbridge's, between the Food Court and Sears. Please contact Ed Lurcott (610-436-0387) to help us stage a great Astronomy Day exhibit! And, believe it or not, it really is a lot of fun!



CCAS April Observing Session

The next CCAS Observing Session will be at the Brandywine Valley Association's Myrick Conservancy Center (see map on page 11) on Friday April 16, 2004 starting at sunset; or earlier, if you can get there earlier. If it's too cloudy on Friday, then the Observing Session will be on Saturday April 17, 2004. At the observing sessions, there will be help available to set up and use your telescopes. If you're having trouble using your telescope, or finding your way around the sky, come on out and get some assistance. All members are invited whether they have a telescope or not. Telescope owners are always glad to share the view through their telescope. CCAS Observing Sessions are always free of charge. Remember to dress warmly!



CCAS Introductory Astronomy Class

The Education Committee of the CCAS is presently running a class intended to introduce people to basic astronomy. This series of eight classes is held on the first and third Tuesdays of each month, starting at 7:00 p.m. and ending at 8:00 p.m. These are the dates and topics for the remaining classes:

April 6	The Secret Life of Stars
April 20	Planetarium Field Trip (WCU)
May 4	The Moon
May 18	Telescopes, Binoculars and Mounts

The classes are held at the University of Pennsylvania's Flower and Cook Observatory in Willistown Township. The FCO is located just a few miles south of Malvern. It is located near the intersection of Warren Avenue and Providence Road, just west of Warren Avenue on Providence Road. A map showing the location is on page 11.



Treasurer's Report by Bob Popovich

February 2004 Financial Summary

Beginning Balance	\$1,253
Deposits	460
Disbursements	<u>608</u>
Ending Balance	\$1,105

Membership Renewals Due

04/2004:	Bogucki Dunlop Goldader Hess Murray Plotkin
05/2004:	Brownback Grillo

Hain
Jackson
Pioch
Turco
06/2004: Taylor

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Membership Renewals

You can renew your CCAS membership by writing a check payable to "Chester County Astronomical Society" and sending it to our Treasurer:

Bob Popovich
416 Fairfax Drive
Exton, PA 19341-1814

The current dues amounts are listed in the *CCAS Information Directory* on a later page in this newsletter.

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Calendar Notes

April 6, 2004 (Tuesday)	Introductory Astronomy Class Location: Flower & Cook Observatory 7:00 p.m. EDT
April 16/17, 2004 (Friday/Saturday)	CCAS Observing Session Location: BVA sunset
April 20, 2004 (Tuesday) (note date change)	CCAS Meeting Location: West Chester University 7:00 p.m. EDT
April 20, 2004 (Tuesday)	Introductory Astronomy Class Location: West Chester University 7:00 p.m. EDT
April 24, 2004	National Astronomy Day
May 4, 2004 (Tuesday)	Introductory Astronomy Class Location: Flower & Cook Observatory 7:00 p.m. EDT
May 11, 2004 (Tuesday)	CCAS Meeting Location: West Chester University 7:30 p.m. EDT
May 18, 2004 (Tuesday)	Introductory Astronomy Class Location: Flower & Cook Observatory 7:00 p.m. EDT
May 21/22, 2004 (Friday/Saturday)	CCAS Observing Session Location: BVA sunset

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CCAS in Special Light Pollution Program

By Vic Carlucci

The CCAS has joined forces with several other area astronomy societies to organize and conduct a regional program to help educate the public about light pollution. Entitled "Save The Stars," the plan is to encourage people (and businesses and institutions) to turn OFF outdoor lights, as many as possible, for one night to see what a difference it makes. People will be encouraged to hold local star parties, perhaps right in their own darkened neighborhood, to see what they've been missing. The various astronomical societies will hold star

parties around the area as well, to provide telescopic viewing for the public, answer questions, and provide more information about light pollution and how they can help reduce it right at their own homes. Efforts are under way to engage the media in promoting this event, and also to have Derrick Pitts do one of his radio programs that night.

The "Save The Stars" gathering is scheduled for May 7th, rain date May 8th. All our members are invited to bring their telescopes and help with handouts. Thanks for helping to make this event successful.

The advertising poster for this event is included on page 8. All CCAS members are encouraged to make copies of this poster and distribute it to friends, families, etc. Place copies at stores, libraries, churches, etc., to help get the word out. Your help with the advertising is greatly appreciated. This is a really important endeavor. After all, how can you teach your children and grandchildren to "reach for the stars" if they've never seen the stars??

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Upcoming Meeting Topics

In May, James Morgan, from the Mid-East Region of the Astronomical League (MERAL), will talk with us about the Astronomical League Observing programs.

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Librarian Needed

Our current Librarian, Bill O'Hara, needs to retire from this position. We therefore need someone who can serve as the Society Librarian. This person would keep track of the 60 or so books we have in the Society's collection. This person would need to store these books at their home, as we don't have a location where the Society can store anything. On the other hand, this means the person serving as Librarian (and their family) has ready access to all those fine books on astronomy and space exploration! That household could well consider itself lucky to have such a library right at hand! Please consider helping out the Society and letting Bill retire by serving as Librarian. If interested please contact our President Mike Turco at 610-399-3423. Thanks!

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Newsletter Deadlines

These are the deadlines for submitting material for publication in the newsletter, through the December 2004 issue.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
May 2004	04/28/2004
June 2004	05/26/2004
July 2004	06/25/2004
August 2004	07/28/2004
September 2004	08/27/2004
October 2004	09/27/2004
November 2004	10/27/2004
December 2004	11/26/2004

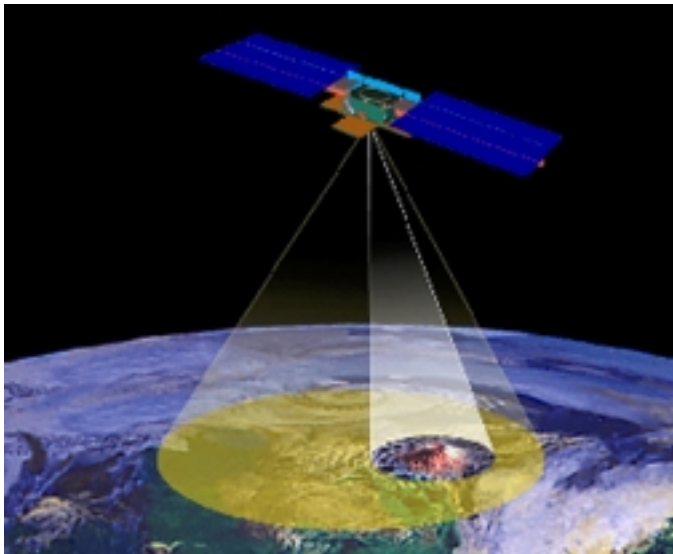
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Sciencecraft

By Patrick L. Barry and Tony Phillips

Probes that can distinguish between "interesting" things and "boring" things are vital for deep space exploration, say JPL scientists.

Along with his colleagues in NASA's Space Technology 6 Project (ST6), JPL's Steven Chien is working to develop an artificial intelligence technology that does just that. They call it the Autonomous Sciencecraft Experiment, and it's one of many next-generation satellite technologies emerging from NASA's New Millennium Program.



The Autonomous Sciencecraft technology that will be tested as part of NASA's Space Technology 6 mission will use artificial intelligence to select and transmit only the scientifically significant images.

As humanity expands its exploration of the outer solar system—or even neighboring solar systems!—the probes we send suffer from two unavoidable handicaps. First, commands radioed by mission scientists on Earth take a long time to reach

the probe: six hours for the planned New Horizons mission to Pluto, for example.

Second, the great distance also means that data beamed back by the probe trickles to Earth at a lower bandwidth—often much less than an old 28.8 kbps modem. Waiting for hundreds or thousands of multi-megabyte scientific images to download could take weeks. And often many of those images will be "boring," that is, they won't contain anything new or important for scientists to puzzle over. That's certainly not the most efficient way of using a multi-million dollar probe.

Even worse, what if one of those images showed something extremely "interesting"—a rare event like a volcanic eruption or an unexpected feature like glaciers of methane ice? By the time scientists see the images, hours or days would have passed, and it may be too late to tell the probe to take a closer look.

But how can a probe's computer brain possibly decide what's "interesting" to scientists and what's not?

"What you really want is a probe that can identify changes or unique features and focus on those things on its own, rather than just taking images indiscriminately," says Arthur Chmielewski, one of Chien's colleagues at JPL.

Indeed, that's what Chien's software does. It looks for things that change. A mission to Jupiter's icy moon Europa, for instance, might zero in on newly-formed cracks in the ice. Using artificial intelligence to set priorities, the probe could capture a complete movie of growing fractures rather than a single haphazard snapshot.

Until scientists can actually travel to deep space and explore distant worlds in person, they'll need spacecraft "out there" that can do some of the thinking for them. Sciencecraft is leading the way.

Learn more about Sciencecraft at nmp.nasa.gov/st6. Kids can make a "Star Finder" for this month and learn about another of the ST6 technologies at:

spaceplace.nasa.gov/st6starfinder/st6starfinder.htm .

The preceding article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Astronomus

"That's My Boy!"

By Bob Popovich

I am Katerina and I'd love to tell you about my boy. He came into the world on the 27th of December in his grandfather's house in Weil der Stadt, Germany. His father Heinrich was in the military and was absent from home most of the time. To tell you the truth, that was fine by me (and my son) because my husband was a rough, quarrelsome sort of fellow. In fact, by the time my son had reached 16 years of age his father had gone for good. I have heard that he died traveling in Italy. But enough about him.

My boy was precocious and was ever interested in just about everything. He received enough education to read and write and soon was off to the university. And thanks to a grant from the Duke Württemberg, he was able to attend the Lutheran Seminary in Tübingen. And I want to tell you that coming from a small town like Weil der Stadt, that was quite an achievement!

Aside from theology, my boy enjoyed mathematics. His favorite teacher was a professor of mathematics named Michael Mästlin. In fact, they developed a friendship that continued well beyond the completion of his studies. I remember my boy trying to explain to me a conversation he had with Professor Mästlin in which they discussed a new idea proposed by Polish scientist Kopernik. Something about the earth not being the center of the universe. I confess that I did not understand much of it. But that's OK because my boy understood. But perhaps I should stop now and let him tell you about these things himself.

Kopernik's theory is very appealing. That the sun lies at the center of the solar system and that all six planets revolve around it represents a cleaner, more logical theory than that of Ptolemy. I would love to devote time to studying this. But at the moment, I am pondering an offer to teach mathematics at the Protestant Seminary in Graz, Austria. An offer that I am going to accept.

...Having settled in to my new position, I have the time to ponder this new heliocentric theory. As a Christian professor, it is my duty to understand the order of God's creation. Why were there six planets? What is the reason that the planets are spaced out as they are? How do they move about the sun? I found that asking these "why", "what" and "how" questions were new to astronomers. It seems that up until now they were content with recording their observations but not in extending those observations to the next logical step.

As I once wrote: "...Starting out from those things which impinge on the senses, we are carried by the operation of the mind to higher things which can not be grasped by any sharpness of the senses...In the business of astronomy, in which we first of all perceive with our eyes the various positions of the planets at different times, and reasoning then imposes itself on these observations and leads the mind to recognition of the form of the universe."

For the better part of the next three decades I would be consumed by the desire to gain even a slight understanding of the marvel of creation.

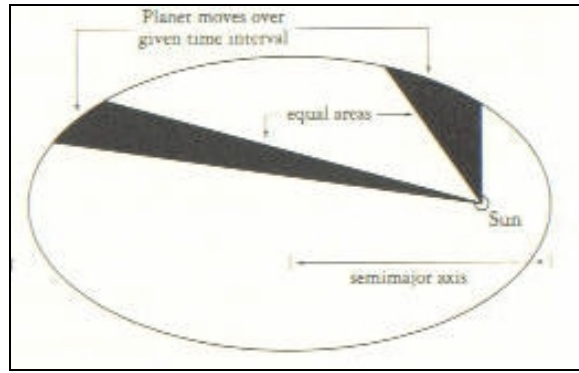
There can be little doubt that these astronomical observations can be explained simply and that these simple explanations can be universally applied. And the language of this simplicity must be mathematics. My communications with that Danish fellow, you know- the one with the silver-tipped nose, lead me to the source of information that I needed to demonstrate the truth of my belief.

I met the Dane in February. He agreed to take me on as his assistant. Barely 18 months later he was dead, and I was named Imperial Mathematician.

His observational records were extensive and regarded as being of unparalleled precision. I poured over them, particularly those of Mars, and have concluded that his predicted position of Mars (using a circular orbit) was off by 8 arc minutes. This error was not observational, but mathematical. I thus postulated the following:

- The planets travel about the sun not in circles, but in ellipses. Furthermore, the sum of the distances from any point on the ellipse to the two foci of the ellipse must be the same.
- The planets move faster at perihelion than they do at aphelion. In addition, a line joining the planet to the sun sweeps equal areas in equal time intervals.

To arrive at these two theories, I *waged war* with Mars. Using up hundreds of sheets of paper, I worked out the mathematics of this motion and feel confident that these two theories are correct.



Continuing my mathematical work, it was years later that I arrived at my third and final theory:

- The ratio of the period squared to the semimajor axis cubed is the same for all the planets. (The semimajor axis is half the long axis of an ellipse. Note the above illustration.)

By this point in his life Katerina's boy was quite famous. These ideas of his were known all through the scientific world. Today they are acknowledged as "laws." Here are 3 thoughts as to why these laws are truly wondrous:

- They are simple
- They eloquently synthesize mountains of observational data
- The process used to arrive at the laws laid the foundation for the modern scientific method

While he always considered himself a mathematician more than an astronomer (though astronomy was a branch of mathematics in those days), he is credited with discovering a supernova and has left a giant mark on the science of astronomy.

Following his death at noon on November 15, poet John Donne described him as one who "Hath received it into his care, that no new thing should be done in heaven without his knowledge."

For all of us who love the science of astronomy, I would feel free to say that we can refer to Katerina's boy as *our boy*, too.

And if you haven't deduced who *our boy* is, here's his self-portrait:

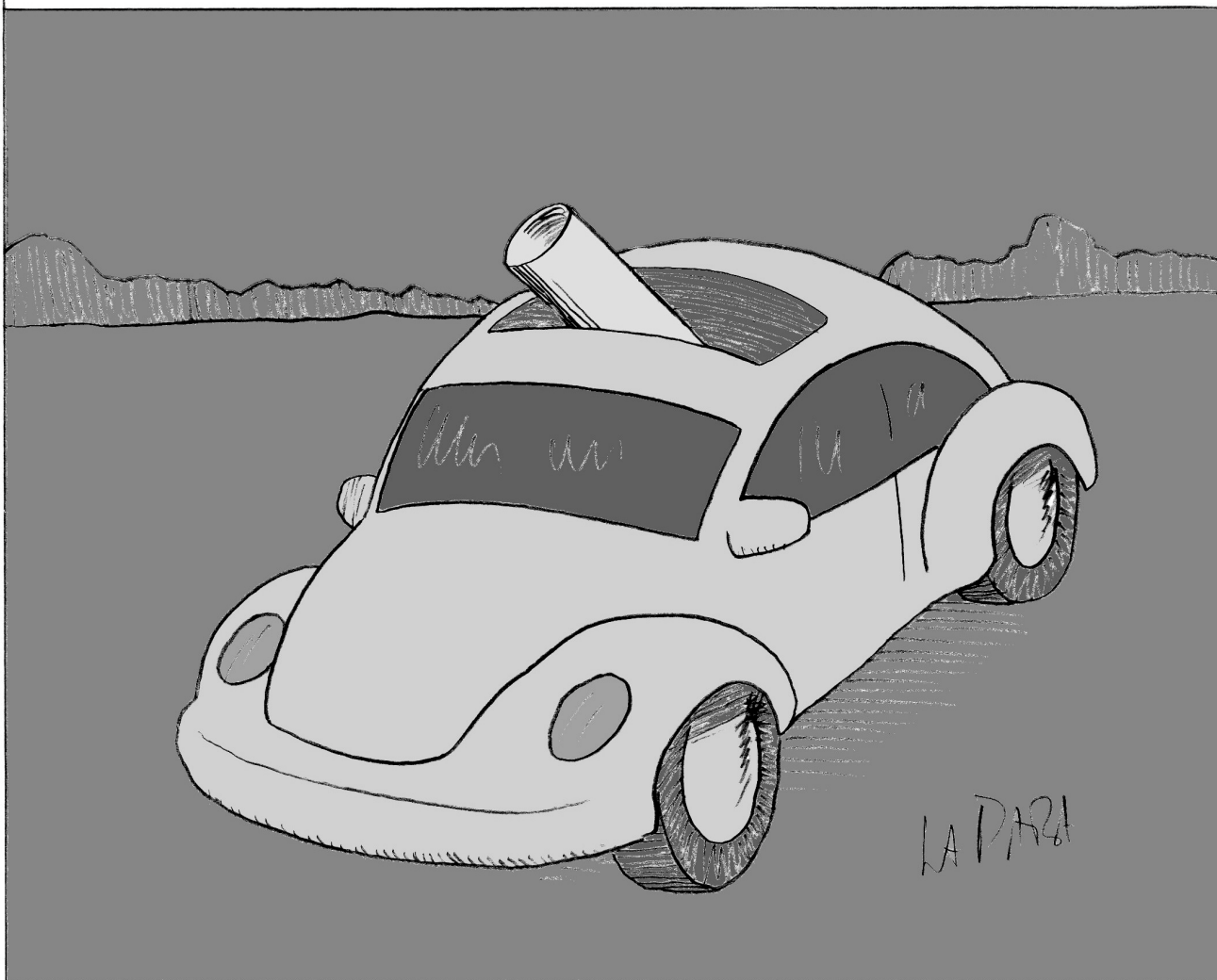


Recognize him? Why, of course it's...

Next Time: Just Another Night At The Office



WEIRD TELESCOPES, NO 4



THE GET-THERE, GO-TO PORTABLE OBSERVATORY

Cartoon by Nicholas La Para

Save the Stars

JOIN YOUR NEIGHBORS
FRIDAY MAY 7TH AT 7:00 PM
TURN OFF YOUR OUTSIDE LIGHTS
Rain Date Saturday May 8th

We cordially invite all our neighbors in Chester, Montgomery, Delaware and Berks counties to turn off your lights and come to a **STAR PARTY** at Warwick County Park. 3 1/2 miles west of route 100 just off route 23.

SPEAKER TOPICS:
SAVE MONEY WITH EFFICIENT
OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Presentation by Karl Krasley president POLC

LOOKING THROUGH THE EYES OF HUBBLE

Presentation by Dr. Jeff Goldader. Held a research fellowship at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, and has observed with the NASA Hubble Space Telescope.

LOOK THROUGH THE CLUBS TELESCOPES
and learn about deep sky objects and the planets
DOOR PRIZES

KARL KRASLEY
610-495-0867

VICTOR CARLUCCI
610-458-7457

*Chester County Parks & Recreation Commission will collect a \$5.00
VEHICLE PARKING FEE to defray its costs for supporting this event.

Let's **SAVE** the **STARS** for our children

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE:

Pennsylvania Outdoor



www.poc.org
www.poc.org@earthlink.net

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM:



www.ccas.us



www.chescomstarso.org



www.dva.org

www.SprintDesign.com 800-333-3333

CCAS Information Directory

CCAS Lending Telescopes

Contact Kathy Buczynski to make arrangements to borrow one of the Society's lending telescopes. CCAS members can borrow a lending telescope for a month at a time; longer if no one else wants to borrow it after you. Kathy's phone number is 610-436-0821.

CCAS Lending Library

Contact our Librarian, Bill O'Hara, to make arrangements to borrow one of the books in the CCAS lending library. Copies of the catalog are available at CCAS meetings. Bill's phone number is 610-696-1422.

Contributing to *Observations*

Contributions of articles relating to astronomy and space exploration are always welcome. If you have a computer, and an Internet connection, you can attach the file to an e-mail message and send it to newsletter@ccas.us

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:

Jim Anderson
1249 West Kings Highway
Coatesville, PA 19320-1133

Get CCAS Newsletters via E-mail

You can receive the monthly newsletter by e-mail. All you need is a PC or Mac with an Internet e-mail connection. To get more information about how this works, send an e-mail request to Jim Anderson, the newsletter editor, at:

newsletter@ccas.us

CCAS A.L. Award Coordinators

These are the members to contact when you have completed your observing log for the Messier, Binocular Messier, Lunar, or Double Star Awards:

Messier (both): Jim Anderson
(610-857-4751)

Lunar: Ed Lurcott
(610-436-0387)

Double Star: Jim Anderson
(610-857-4751)

CCAS Purpose

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. The Society also provides telescopes and expertise for "star nights" for school, scout, and other civic groups.

CCAS Executive Committee

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

President: Mike Turco
(610) 399-3423

Vice Pres: Steve Limeburner
(610) 353-3986

Treasurer: Bob Popovich
(610) 363-8242

Secretary: Caitlin Grey
(610) 918-9049

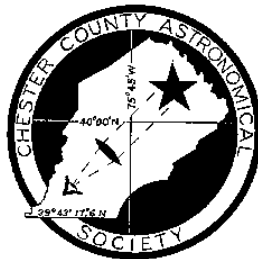
**ALCor and
Newsletter:** Jim Anderson
(610) 857-4751

Librarian: William O'Hara
(610) 696-1422

Observing: Ed Lurcott
(610) 436-0387

Education: Kathy Buczynski
(610) 436-0821

Public Relations: Vic Carlucci
(610) 458-7457



CCAS Membership Information

The present membership rates are as follows:

REGULAR MEMBER.....\$25/year
SENIOR MEMBER.....\$10/year
STUDENT MEMBER.....\$ 5/year
JUNIOR MEMBER.....\$ 5/year
FAMILY MEMBER.....\$35/year

Membership Renewals

Check the date printed on the address label of this issue of *Observations*; "exp." appears in front of it, just after your name. If you are due to renew, you may send your renewal check made out to "Chester County Astronomical Society". Mail to:

Bob Popovich
416 Fairfax Drive
Exton, PA 19341-1814

Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates

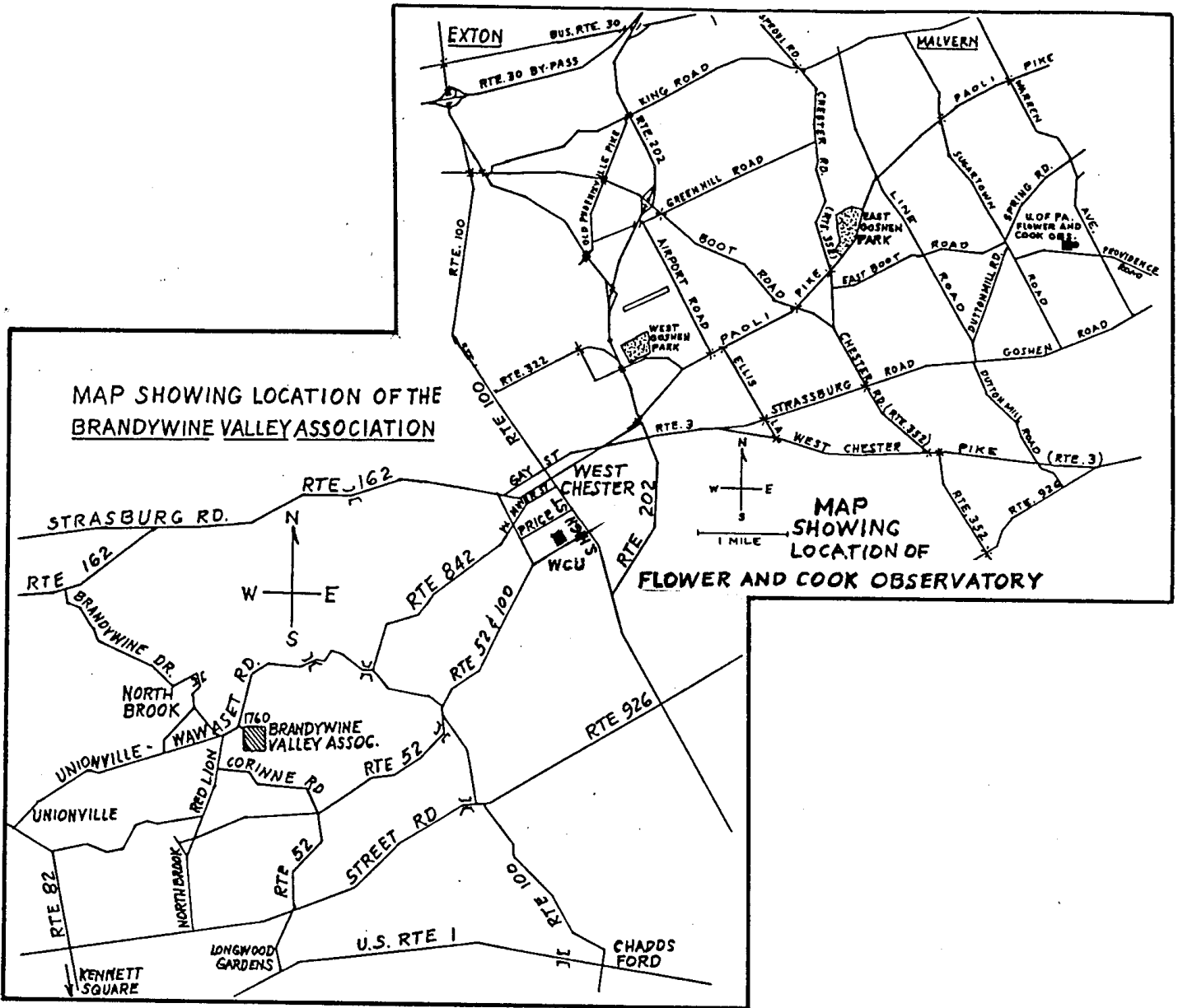
Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at a reduced price of **\$32.95** which is much less than the newsstand price of \$66.00, and also cheaper than individual subscriptions (\$42.95)! Make **sure** you make out the check to the **Chester County Astronomical Society** (do **not** make the check out to Sky Publishing, this messes things all up big time), note that it's for *Sky & Telescope*, and mail to Bob Popovich. Or you can bring it to the next Society meeting and give it to Bob there. **If you have any questions by all means call Bob first (610-363-8242)**. Buying a subscription this way also gets you a 10% discount on other Sky Publishing merchandise.

CCAS Website

Pete LaFrance is the Society's Webmaster. You can check our Website at:

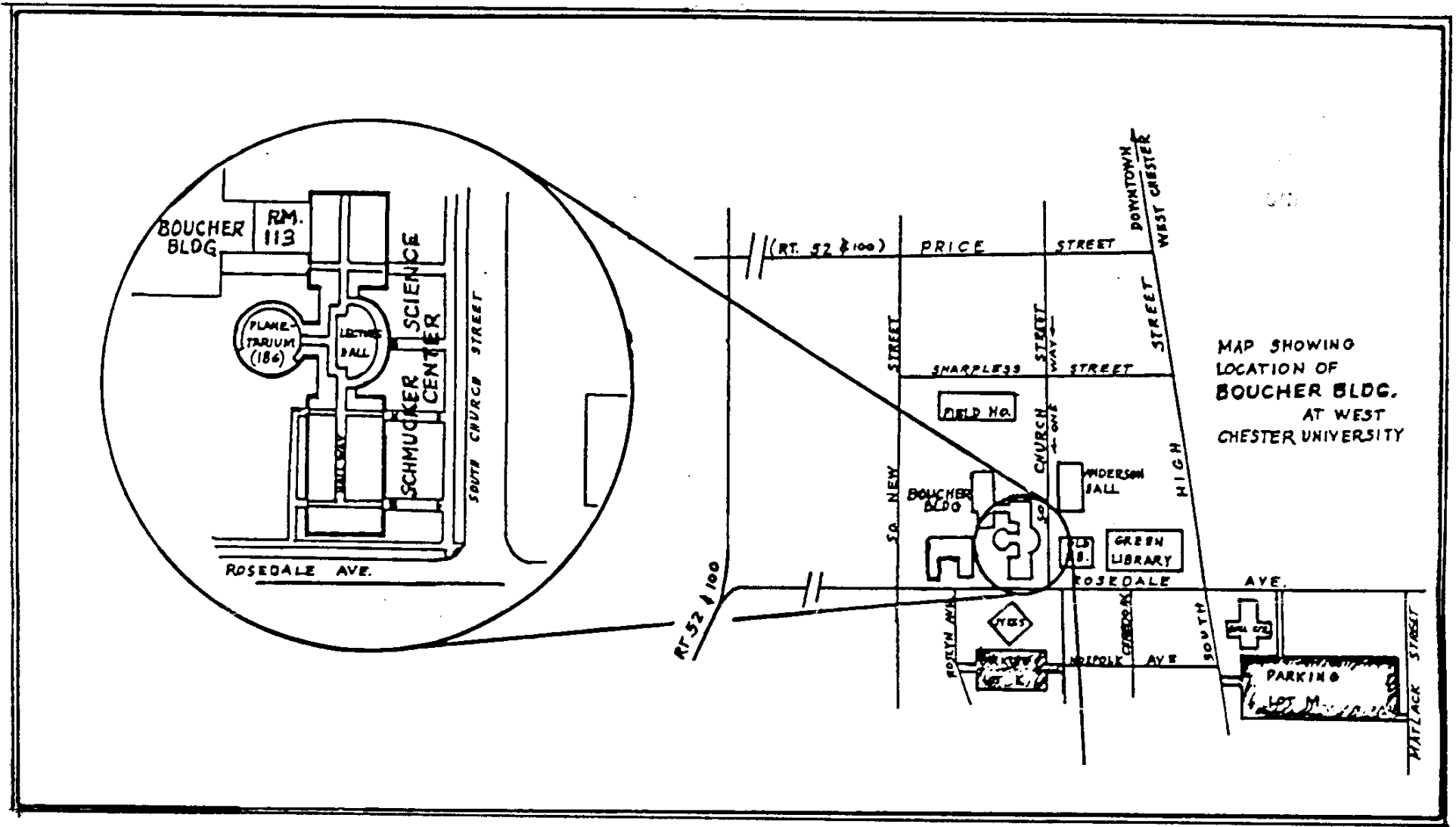
<http://www.ccas.us/>

Pete welcomes any additions to the site by Society members. The contributions can be of any astronomy subject or object, or can be related to space exploration. The only requirement is that it is your own work; no copying copyrighted material! Give your contributions to Pete LaFrance (610-268-2616) or e-mail to lafrance@kennett.net



To get to the Myrick Conservation Center of the Brandywine Valley Association from West Chester, go south on High Street in West Chester past the Courthouse. At the next traffic light, turn right on Miner Street, which is also PA Rt. 842. Follow Rt. 842 for about 6 miles.

To get to the observing site at the BVA property, turn off Route 842 into the parking lot by the office: look for the signs to the office along Route 842. From that parking lot, go up the farm lane to the left; it's about 800 feet or so to the top of the hill. If you arrive after dark, please turn off your headlights and just use parking lights as you come up the hill (so you don't ruin other observers' night vision).



Parking is available behind Sykes Student Center on the south side of Rosedale Avenue (Parking Lot K), and behind the Bull Center at the corner of Rosedale Avenue and South High Street (Parking Lot M). If you arrive early enough, you may be able to get an on-street parking space along South Church Street, or along Rosedale Avenue. You can take the Matlack Street exit from Rt. 202 South; Matlack Street is shown on the map at the lower right corner with Rt. 202 off the map. If approaching West Chester from the south, using Rt. 202 North, you would continue straight on South High Street where Rt. 202 branches off to the right. This would bring you onto the map on South High Street near Parking Lot M, also in the lower right corner.