

HISTORICAL ASTRONOMY DIVISION

NEWSLETTER 11

March 1989

Historical Astronomy Division Meets in Ann Arbor, June 11th and 12th, 1989.

The HAD has accepted with enthusiasm an invitation from the Departments of Astronomy and History at the University of Michigan to meet in Ann Arbor during the June AAS meetings. The occasion is the restoration of the 1854 Detroit Observatory. One or two special afternoon sessions on the history of the Observatory are being planned for Sunday, June 11, and will be held in that historic place. A collection of early observatory equipment, photographs, and possibly historic movie footage will be on display, and, if the weather cooperates, there will be viewing sessions with the 12-inch refractor. Papers on the Detroit Observatory will be presented by University of Michigan scholars, and the HAD requests that members interested in the history of astronomy in the north-central regions also consider contributed papers to round out the Sunday sessions. The HAD is also planning two regular paper sessions for Monday, June 12.

The meeting room at the old observatory is not large. Please let David DeVorkin know soon (by April 1 if possible) if you are going to attend. Drop him a letter with your membership renewal!!!

Of special interest to HAD members: The University Library's Department of Rare Books and Special Collections will present an exhibit of astronomical materials during the AAS Michigan meetings. There will be early editions of many old favorites, including a Copernicus (specifics to follow in the final meeting program).

Remember: The abstract deadline for Michigan is April 7. First come first served, and if there is an overabundance of papers, those with the latest postmarks will be turned into poster papers.

Results of Election

The HAD election results have been known since the January AAS meetings in Boston. They are: Vice-Chairman and Chairman-Elect: JOHN LANKFORD, Professor of the social history of modern science at the University of Missouri-Columbia; Committee Members: RUTH FREITAG, senior science specialist in LC's Science and Technology Division and WOODRUFF T. SULLIVAN, astronomer and historian of astronomy at the University of Washington. Kate Bracher is now Chairman of the HAD, David DeVorkin continues as Secretary/Treasurer. We want to thank Don Osterbrock, outgoing chairman, as well as outgoing committee members Art Hoag and Barbara Welther for all of their hard work and valuable advice and assistance. Don prepared the 1988 HAD report to the AAS, which follows:

Historical Astronomy Division Report 1988

-- Don Osterbrock,

The Historical Astronomy Division held its ninth annual meeting in conjunction with the 173rd meeting of the American Astronomical Society in Boston on January 7-10, 1989. The meeting marked both the 150th anniversary of the Harvard College Observatory and the centennial of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. On January 7th, at the invitation of the Center for Astrophysics and its Director, Irwin Shapiro, the HAD met at the Phillips Auditorium of the HCO for a full day of invited papers on the theme "Astronomy at Cambridge." An excellent historical program, involving speakers and commentators, was arranged by Owen Gingerich, Mark Rothenberg, and Barbara Welther. About 150 people attended these sessions. On January 8th, there was a special tour of the Oak Ridge Observatory, in which about 35 people participated. That same day receptions were held to open two special history of astronomy exhibits at the Archives and the Instruments Collection in Harvard Yard; these exhibits remained on display during the entire AAS meeting.

On January 9th, two HAD oral sessions and one poster session for historical papers were held at the Marriott Copley Place Hotel jointly with the AAS. Seymour Chapin presented an invited paper on the Bicentennial of the French Revolution and the Associated changes that occurred at the Paris Observatory. In addition, 16 contributed papers were presented; approximately 75 people attended the morning oral session, approximately 100 the afternoon session, and probably close to 1000 the poster session. On January 10th, Barbara Welther presented an invited talk to the entire AAS on "Lighthouses of the Skies: The Harvard and Smithsonian Anniversaries."

On January 7th, the HAD Committee met, heard the reports of the Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer, and discussed plans for the future. On January 9th, the annual HAD business meeting was held in the afternoon, just before the session for oral papers. About 25 members attended. Plans were discussed for the summer meeting to be held jointly with the AAS at Ann Arbor. LeRoy Doggett delivered an invitation from the Naval Observatory for the HAD to meet there in connection with the AAS Washington meeting in January 1990. Also, the possibilities of holding meetings with the AAS in Albuquerque in June 1990 and/or in Philadelphia in January 1991, or with the DPS and/or DPA on some other occasion, were discussed. Various other items of business were also discussed, including reports of the Secretary-Treasurer, the Audit Subcommittee, and the HAD-DPS and the HAD-DDA Liaison Committees.

As a result of a letter from several Naval Observatory astronomers, including two HAD members, the problem of how to ensure that more obituary articles or memorial biographies of astronomers be published was discussed. They are important source material for future historians. At the close of this discussion, an Ad Hoc Committee on Obituaries, consisting of Steven Dick (Chairman), John Lankford, and Stephen Brush, was appointed to collect information and formulate plans for possible future action.

At the end of the business meeting, the results of the election were announced. The slate of candidates had been prepared, under the By-Laws, by the Nominating Subcommittee consisting of Edwin Krupp (Chairman), Brenda Corbin and Kevin Krisciunas. John Lankford was elected Vice-Chairman, and Ruth Freitag and Woodruff Sullivan, III, were elected Committee Members, all for two-year terms. Also, under the By-Laws, David DeVorkin was appointed for a second four-year term as Secretary-Treasurer by the Committee at its meeting on January 7th. At the close of the business meeting, the former Vice-Chairman, Katherine Bracher, stepped up to begin her two-year term as Chairman.

The HAD Newsletter was expanded, mostly to include the very useful bibliographies of historical papers and books, started by David DeVorkin and continued by Ruth Freitag.

There are approximately 220 members in the Division.

Are YOU Paid Up?

Take three: There are still some HAD members (Full and Affiliate) who are rapidly becoming noticeably overdue. If your membership was up by mid-1988, and you elect not to renew, this will be the last newsletter you will receive. Remember: HAD regular members: \$6.00/3 years; affiliates: \$15.00/3 years. Have a look at your HAD mailing label: the date on the mailing label is the date your membership lapses, even if an N appears there ("N" means status: paid up). Once I change that dues status code to a Y (dues "irregularity") that HAD member will be in limbo and will no longer receive the newsletter.

The Centennial Meeting of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific

As we noted in the last Newsletter, the ASP History Committee is organizing a number of sessions at its upcoming centennial meeting in Berkeley. The historical sessions will take place between June 21 - 23, and the ASP meeting itself runs till the 25th. The historical sessions are entitled "Astronomy over the ASP's Century" and are designed to present an overview of the past century of astronomy as well as to honor the centennial of Edwin Hubble's birth. Speakers include both historians of astronomy and astronomers. For further information write to the ASP, at 390 Ashton Ave, San Francisco CA 94112. Contributed papers dealing with the history of astronomy are also solicited. Please send an abstract of your talk, by May 12, to: Woodruff Sullivan, Chair, ASP History Committee, Dept. of Astronomy, Mail Stop FM20 University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195.

HAD Washington D.C. Meeting, January 1990:

At the Boston HAD business meeting, the membership decided to meet in Washington, D.C. during the regular meetings of the AAS (January 9-13, 1990). The decision was made very easy when the U. S. Naval Observatory volunteered to act as host for the HAD. No particulars have been worked out as yet, but the local contact point will be LeRoy E. Doggett, Nautical Almanac Office, U. S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C. 20390.

Herbert C. Pollock/Dudley Observatory Awards 1989 - 1990

The Board of Trustees of the Dudley Observatory announces that the sixth annual competition for the Herbert C. Pollock Award in the History of Astronomy and Astrophysics has been won by: Robert W. Smith, (Johns Hopkins/National Air and Space Museum), for his project "A Biography of V. M. Slipher." Secondary Pollock awards, in the amount of \$5,000 each, were made to: Woodruff T. Sullivan, III, (U. Washington) for "A History of Radio Astronomy," and to Nathaniel M. White, (Lowell Observatory) for "A History of Lunar Occultation Technique from 1600 to the Present."

Proposed Forum/Symposium on Archaeo-/Ethnoastronomy -- Michael Zeilik

The AAS will hold its summer meeting in 1990 in Albuquerque. Michael Zeilik writes to suggest a meeting before or after the AAS to deal in depth with issues of concern to specialists in archaeo-/ethnoastronomy. Anyone interested in helping to define this proposal (topics to cover, issues to address, tours and study sites, possible sponsors, presenters) should contact him at The Center for Graduate Studies at Los Alamos, 4000 University Drive, Los Alamos, NM 87544. Mail Stop M590. EMail: gradcenter@unm-la.lanl.gov.

Solar Physics Division Meeting

Late news from the AAS/SPD is that they are meeting at the Applied Physics Laboratory, near Laurel, Maryland, June 5 - 8. Abstract deadline is April 7, 1989 and contributions in all topics related to solar research are welcome. If interested, contact David Rust, Chairman of the LOC at the Applied Physics Laboratory, (301)-953-5414 or 953-5256.

AGU Committee on the History of Geophysics

The next meeting of the American Geophysical Union's Committee on the History of Geophysics will be with the AGU in San Francisco. Specific dates and times have not been announced, but interested HAD members may contact the new AGU Chairman of the History Committee, Dr. Ronald C. Taylor, Meteorology Program, National Science Foundation, Washington, DC.

New Historical Resource

A very useful catalog has just appeared: James R. Fleming, Guide to Historical Resources in the Atmospheric Sciences: Archives, Manuscripts and Special Collections in the Washington, D.C. Area. (NCAR Technical Note, NCAR/TN-327+1A, January 1989). It is an extensive review of sources well beyond the limits implied in the title, and was prepared under the auspices of the Climate and Global Dynamics Division, NCAR, Boulder, Colorado. Fleming is at Colby College.

Author's Query:

For a biography of the 19th century American astronomer and Union general, Ormsby MacKnight Mitchel, wanted: information on his astronomical career prior to the Civil War, especially his influence on the establishment of, and growth of, American observatories. Write to: Kevin J. Weddle, Captain, U.S. Army, Asst Professor, Department of History, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York 10996.

Call for Authors:

Norriss S. Hetherington writes to notify HAD members of two projects he has underway: (1) to participate in the preparation of a one-volume encyclopedia of cosmology and (2) to encourage publication of manuscripts for a new series of volumes on the history of astronomy. Historians of science as well as astronomers are encouraged to contribute. For further information, write: Norriss S. Hetherington, Institute for the History of Astronomy, 1742 Spruce Street, Suite 201, Berkeley, CA 94709.