

# HISTORICAL ASTRONOMY DIVISION NEWSLETTER 12 MAY 1989

## The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Meetings June 11 - 15, 1989

The HAD meeting at the University of Michigan's Detroit Observatory on Sunday, June 11, as well as its regular session the following day, will be held in conjunction with the 174th meeting of the American Astronomical Society.

Of special interest to HAD members will be the 1854 Detroit Observatory itself, recently restored, and the site of Sunday's paper sessions. The observatory is at the corner of Observatory and Ann Streets, on the north east corner of central campus, directly across from the Old Main Hospital, about a ten minute walk from the hotels. Ask at your hotel desk for specific directions. Nicholas Steneck, Professor of History at the University and our host on Sunday, reports that original observatory equipment, photographs, and possibly historic movie footage will be on display, including the historic 12-inch Fitz refractor. The telescope will be both on view and available for viewing, and HAD members are welcome to browse after the Sunday sessions. The observatory and telescope will also be open Monday and Tuesday evenings for viewing; those who know the local weather advise that if you are interested in seeing how the old telescope performs, take the first available chance! One way or the other, cloudy or clear, the Sunday session promises to be a very satisfying day for historians.

And history will continue to be available all week. Karla M. Vandersypen of the University's Department of Rare Books and Special Collections reports that they will have on display rare astronomical works from the Department's outstanding history of science collection. Featured in the exhibition, located in the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, 7th floor, on the central campus, are landmark works in the development of astronomy, including those by Ptolemy, Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Huygens, Flamsteed, Halley, Herschel, and Laplace. Also on view will be selections from the Department's collection of scientific instruments -- celestial globes, quadrants, early calendars, and astronomical tables -- and its remarkable holdings of Islamic astronomical manuscripts. The exhibition will be open Monday through Friday, 1 to 5 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. till noon. It will not be open Sunday.

### o SCHEDULE OF PAPERS

(All papers will be allowed 20 minutes, with up to 10 minutes for discussion)

-- Sunday, June 11, at the Detroit Observatory

Location: corner of Observatory and Ann Streets, on the north east corner of central campus, directly across from the Old Main Hospital, about a ten minute walk from the hotels. Ask at your hotel desk for specific directions.

"The History of Astronomy at Michigan" 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

- \* Margaret Steneck (U. Mich) The Founding of the Detroit Observatory
- \* Nicholas Steneck (U. Mich) Astronomy at Michigan in the Late 19th Century
- \* Rudi Lindner (U. Mich) Astronomy at Michigan in the Early 20th Century
- \* T. R. Williams (AAVSO) Robert Reynolds McMath as an Amateur Astronomer - An Assessment
- \* Owen Gingerich (Harvard-Smithsonian CfA) The 1953 Michigan Summer Symposium in Astrophysics

-- Monday, June 12, Morning Session

location: Henderson Room, 3rd floor, Michigan League Bldg.

"History and Education" 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

- \* K. D. Pang, et al. (JPL/Caltech) Shang Dynasty Oracle Bone Eclipse Records and the Earth's Rotation Rate in 1302 BC
- \* D. E. Osterbrock (Lick Observatory/UCSC) W. W. Campbell of Lick Observatory: The Creative Scientist Who Became a Radial-Velocity Factory Manager
- \* W. A. Gutsch (American Museum/Hayden Planetarium) The Generation of New Images on Optical Laser Disks for Astronomy Teaching in Planetariums and Classrooms

## HAD Business

Although there will be no formal business meeting of the HAD in Michigan, in accordance with a decision at the Boston meetings, there still will be informal discussions of a number of issues of interest raised by HAD members. Those identified to date are:

1) The AAS Executive Office is contemplating a membership survey next year, in order to better evaluate current programs and plan new ones, and has contacted a number of HAD officers to identify issues of interest to the HAD that might be expressed or evaluated in properly crafted questions to the general AAS membership. The deadline for responses was March 31, and members of the HAD committee responded. Briefly, three issues were raised: the preservation of archival records of the AAS, its divisions, institutions and individual members; the need for greater attention to obituary notices; preserving the published record as it now exists. All three issues have been a continuing interest of historians in the HAD, and we would like to know to what degree the AAS membership shares our concern, and is willing to support activities that foster preservation and competent and timely obituaries.

2) The preservation of the records of the Astrophysical Journal. The first four decades of the ApJ have been preserved in the papers of George Ellery Hale, Edwin Frost and Otto Struve. Records in the 1950s and 1960s have been lost. We are anxious that subsequent records be preserved. Helmut Abt has been doing a heroic job keeping the files intact, but now has run out of room and is in need of support to microfilm the inactive files. To date no established university archive has expressed an interest in collecting the files for preservation, so the only recourse is to condense them through microform reproduction. The American Institute of Physics is considering a small grant to help Abt start the process, which involves filming both a large backlog and a yearly chunk of retired records. David DeVorkin has suggested that the HAD help support the preservation of these papers, and with Katherine Bracher's approval, has indicated that the HAD will support the preservation effort by providing \$50.00 for an initial year, with subsequent support to be determined by the wishes of the division membership itself. The amount provided is a token sum, considering that the actual costs of bulk microfilming will be far greater. But it constitutes a strong endorsement that might persuade other parties to provide the balance. Comments on this activity are welcome.

3) **The DUES:** We are in good shape, with just over \$2,000 in our active account, and another \$1,000 in our name in the AAS account. Paid membership has dropped a bit, however, since a number of longtime HAD members, both Full and

Affiliate, have not responded to the last two notices. Also, a number of people responding to the last few calls for dues have not provided the proper amounts: one Full member provided the Affiliate rate (\$15.00/three years - Thanks!!!) and several Affiliates paid only the Full member rate (\$6.00 - Thanks too, but please remit balance!) Be certain who you are! Note mailing label once again: "A" means you are registered as an Affiliate, F designates full AAS member. At the Michigan meeting, we will discuss if we wish to remind those we have dropped through a special mailing.

## **Preliminary News of Washington January Meeting:**

The word is that space for oral papers is going to be very tight since the AAS wants to limit parallel oral sessions, which is a good thing. Thus although we have commonly enjoyed two sessions during the regular meetings in the past, we have been told that this will no longer be assured. The best way to demonstrate that we need two sessions is to show immediate interest. If you are thinking of contributing a paper, contact Kate Bracher or David DeVorkin as soon as possible. If you are interested in the Sunday sessions, which may consist largely of invited papers that treat the theme of national observatories worldwide, contact LeRoy Doggett or Steve Dick of the U.S. Naval Observatory.

There is a possibility that a workshop will be given by the National Park Service on how observatories might participate in their historic site preservation program. Although this is not directly an interest of the HAD, we will keep members informed of plans as they develop.

**Old Business:** Consult *HAD Newsletter 11* if you missed information on the Centennial Meetings of the ASP, to be held in Berkeley June 21 - 25, which will include an extensive history program. Also, Michael Zeilik's proposed forum on Archeo and Ethno Astronomy in the summer of 1990 has stimulated some interest already, so if you want to be involved, contact Zeilik soon.

**QUESTION:** One Affiliate member told me that the preliminary announcement for the Michigan meetings never arrived. If you did not receive one either, please let me know. David DeVorkin.

## **RUTH FREITAG'S AMAZING BIBLIOGRAPHY.....**

Once again, Ruth Freitag has combed the catacombs of the Library of Congress, and has come up with an enormous amount of recently published works of interest to historians of astronomy. Her compilation follows...