

Historical Astronomy Division

HAD Newsletter - May 1985

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Ed Krupp

Tucson, Arizona, was the site, and the 165th Meeting of the American Astronomical Society the occasion, of the fifth annual meeting of the Historical Astronomy Division. Attendance was high and averaged about 90 throughout the three sessions, in which 24 papers were presented. Historical topics ranged from the very recent (Kitt Peak National Observatory) to the very ancient (Classical Greece), with the astronomical content of Van Gogh's night skies occupying some kind of middle ground in the chronological spectrum. Archaeo-astronomical papers dealt with Old Kingdom Egypt, the Classic Maya, and various North American Indian sites.

On Sunday, 13 January 1985, H.A.D. organized and sponsored a trip to the Hohokam Casa Grande ruins, the Gila River Indians Cultural Center, Saguaro West National Monument, and the Picture Rocks Hohokam petroglyphs. Two buses and several assorted automobiles transported more than 100 persons to the sites, and through the cooperation of Casa Grande National Monument Superintendent Sam Henderson and the Ranger Staff everyone had an opportunity to go inside the normally-closed interior of the Casa Grande and evaluate the alleged astronomical sighting ports firsthand.

The Division Business Meeting was held at noon, after the first H.A.D. session, on Monday, 14 January. Retiring Division Chairman Owen Gingerich presided. Place and time for the next H.A.D. meeting were discussed. It was agreed that Charlottesville would be passed up, in favor of Houston, Texas, in conjunction with the American Astronomical Society meeting to be



American Astronomical Society

held there between January 5-8, 1986. But this is not a final decision, and is subject to your comments on the enclosed form.

To ensure the continuation of the practice of 10-minute contributed papers, (not including the additional 5-minute discussion period) the Division will normally have to restrict itself to two regular A.A.S. sessions. For this reason, those attending also favored scheduling additional independent sessions on the day before the first day of the regular A.A.S. meeting. This too must be ratified or overturned by filling out the enclosed form. By this questionnaire, the officers and councilors of the Division solicit the advice and comment of the Division membership on the subject of the place, date, and character of the next meeting. A final decision must be made by late May.

Many members of the Division expressed concern about the one-paper-per-meeting restriction. Some members were unable to present an historical paper because they were scheduled to give scientific research papers. The officers and councilors of the Division recognize that the one-paper restriction presents serious difficulties, and David DeVorkin will explain the problem to the A.A.S. Council at the Charlottesville meeting in June.

The new officers and councilors for the Division were announced.

Chairman	Ed Krupp
Vice-Chairman	Donald Osterbrock
Secretary/Treasurer	David DeVorkin
Councilors	Katherine Bracher Von Del Chamberlain Owen Gingerich

Terms last two years, and Donald Osterbrock will succeed me as Division Chairman in January, 1987.

ON THE ONE-PAPER-PER-MEETING QUESTION - Don Osterbrock

I believe one thing we should bring up to the AAS Council, politely but insisntently, is the concept that HAD members should be allowed to present a historical paper as well as an astronomical paper, if they wish, at a joint AAS-HAD meeting. I personally was very disappointed that I was not permitted to give a historical paper at Tucson, and I know from the discussions that quite a few other members felt the same way. I think the point is that they are such different kinds of research that they do not compete with one another. We are thus unique and different from the other divisions. The history sessions are very well attended by AAS members who are not HAD members, but who want to learn a little about the history of their

science. It is a mistake to set up rules that prevent research astronomers who are interested in history from giving papers at these sessions. The result will be that papers are presented only by a fraction of the HAD members. I feel that we should try to make the AAS Council see that it is in the best interests of the AAS as well as the HAD to waive this restriction.

A CALL FOR DUES ---

The first warning came at the June 1984 Baltimore meetings. It has now been some four years since the HAD was formed, and the first cycle of dues has passed.

On the honor system, if you have been a HAD member for three years or more, please fill out the enclosed form, and enclose \$6.00 for another three years of membership. If you have not been a member for three years, please fill out the form indicating when you became a member. In this manner we hope to update our records.

DIVISION AFFILIATES

Anyone who is a member of a professional scientific or historical organization is eligible to join the HAD as an affiliate member, whether or not he or she is a member of the AAS. Only AAS members are allowed to hold office, however, or to vote. In the case of the HAD, where a substantial fraction of its members are affiliates, the question has come up if a waiver of this rule might not be obtained, for broader representation. Should everyone be able to vote for HAD officers? And which HAD offices should be accessible to affiliates -- all, or the council only? How do you feel? Please reply on the enclosed form.

DIVISION NEWS

Do you have a program or event you would like to mention? An anniversary, recent dissertation or publication to announce? Don't be shy. Send your copy to the HAD Secretary and he will do what he can get it into the next Newsletter.

At Charlottesville: From the AAS "Preliminary Announcement" you should know that the Leander McCormick Observatory, on Mount Jefferson at the west end of the grounds of the University, is celebrating its centennial this year, so afternoon tours for small groups during the AAS meetings will be available Tuesday through Thursday.

Griffith Observatory celebrates its 50th anniversary-- 50 years of public astronomy--on 14 May 1985. Balloons, buttons, birthday cake, and starlight that's traveled 50 years to arrive in time for the party, will be featured.

The National Air and Space Museum is about to issue its first catalog of oral histories taken mainly with those involved in space activities (but not limited to this particular field). To request a free copy, write to David DeVorkin, Room 3557, National Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C. 20560. The Air and Space Museum has also recently acquired a microfilm copy of the "Sources for History of Modern Astrophysics" collection from the American Institute of Physics' Center for History of Physics in New York City.

PRESERVATION COMMITTEE -- Brenda Corbin, David DeVorkin

The Preservation Committee is still alive, although no action has been taken in its one project for at least a year. In June 1984, we reported that while about \$25,000 had been identified as potentially available, for the microfilming of observatory publications, this amount was not sufficient to actually begin work. Furthermore, several people noted that it might be prudent to wait awhile until high density electronic systems might be available. They now seem right around the corner; a "System for Digital Recovery" is about to go operational at the National Air and Space Museum. So watch this space. Once systems like this are completely operational and affordable (to institutions) we will once again take up the campaign.

A FINAL NOTE:

We are in the process of updating membership records. If there is any irregularity in this mailing to you (i.e. you received two copies, etc.) or if you know of someone in the HAD who did not receive the Newsletter, please contact the Secretary, or have them contact the Secretary.