

# THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

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## SOLAR PANELS ARRIVE--OBSERVATORY PREPARES FOR NOVEMBER OPENING!

The long-awaited solar heating panels arrived and were installed on the roof of Hyde Memorial Observatory on Thursday, October 13. Since the final installation of heating ducts and the associated electrical equipment was awaiting arrival of the panels, this is excellent news--and it means we're on schedule for the dedication of the facility on Sunday, November 6.

Dedication ceremonies, to which members of the Prairie Astronomy Club are invited, will begin at 2:00 p.m. There will be brief remarks by the following dignitaries:

Robert D. Northrop, Chairman of Lincoln Foundation, Inc.

Mrs. Thomas R. Pansing, member of the Lincoln Board of Education.

Don Smith, Director of the Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department.

John Massey, Operational Test Site Manager of the Solar Heating & Cooling Project, Marshall Space Flight Center, Alabama (NASA).

Mayor Helen Boosalis will perform the ribbon cutting duties, after which everyone will get their first look at the finished observatory. We expect to keep the building open until evening, when we will have the maiden voyage of the public viewing nights.

The Community Observatory Committee, chaired by Professor Carroll Moore, has recommended to the Park

Board that a committee be set up to administer Hyde Memorial Observatory. Jim Mastera of the Park Board will chair this committee, citizen members of which would be:

Jack Dunn

Rick Johnson

Carroll Moore

Earl Moser

Ed Schmidt

Merton Sprengle

Larry Stepp

Lee Thomas

Of this group, Rick Johnson, Earl Moser and Larry Stepp would be listed as maintenance technicians for the first year of operation of the observatory. Those authorized to operate

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### AND, PROGRESS ON CLUB'S SCOPE...

Larry Stepp reports that the club's eight inch Newtonian is nearing completion and, with some luck, will be ready for installation by the dedication date for the observatory.

"We tried out the optical assembly", Larry said, "and it seemed to perform quite well, considering that all the tube elements were not blackened, and the telescope was not on any kind of stable mounting!"

Larry says he will have "alot of parts" on display at the club's next meeting, but the finished scope will not be assembled.

## NEW CLUB PRESIDENT'S FIRST MESSAGE TO MEMBERS

The October meeting will mark the start of another year for our club, our 18th. We also have a new slate of officers which were elected at the last meeting. Well, a couple of the officers are new or at least hold new offices. The new man on the block is Ron Veys who is our Vice President.

I want to thank Vicki for allowing us the benefit of her husband's services as President for the past year. While Larry will not be an official officer this year, I know we will still benefit from his ideas and advice. Thanks, Larry, for a fine job.

This month's meeting will also mark the beginning of a new club responsibility, that of manning the new Hyde Memorial Observatory. We will have four public nights including the dedication during November. The following months will involve three or more public nights per month as well as the possibility of some special group showings. Besides being a responsibility, the club can reap large benefits from the observatory. Gateway shows did help to attract new members. An outstanding example of such a member is Earl Moser. Earl has served as President a number of times. The ultimate sacrifice has been made by his front lawn in the cause of star parties.

The new observatory can be an even better source of new members. With the observatory and its related publicity potential, the club is coming out of the dark and into the limelight.

I think a first grader who saw a slide show I gave at Belmont school summed it up best. Dawn's comment was, "We learned something about space-- what we never thought of doing." The Hyde Memorial Observatory has great potential to spark such an interest in "...what (the general public) has never thought of doing." Let us make the best of it.

--Rick Johnson

**THE OCTOBER MEETING OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB WILL BE HELD AT MUELLER PLANETARIUM, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN, TUESDAY NIGHT, OCTOBER 25 AT 7:30 P.M. REMEMBER, THIS MEETING ONLY WILL NOT BE AT OLIN HALL!**

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THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, and is free to club members. Yearly subscription without club membership is \$4.00. Regular membership (includes one-year subscription to Sky & Telescope, club newsletter, and four quarterly issues of the Astronomical League's newsletter), is \$10.00. Family membership is \$12.00. Newsletter editor, Leam Thomas (489-3355). Articles and news for publication must be submitted no later than the Monday of the week prior to club meetings. Address all correspondence to: PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, P.O. Box 80553, Lincoln, Nebraska, 68501.

Observing Chairman's Report**AUTUMN SKIES ARE FILLED WITH INTERESTING DEEPSKY OBJECTS**

This month the Autumn skies show us many interesting objects, some being great scientific riddles. In Aquarius, look for NGC 7009, a relatively large planetary nebula about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  degrees west of Nu Aquarii. It is a bluish color and has a tendency to turn greenish when you look directly at it. In larger telescopes it stands out rather well, but smaller instruments give it the appearance of a star of about 8th magnitude.

Those with large (eight inch or larger) telescopes might want to try for the faint galaxy NGC 7974, 3 degrees south of Alpha Pegasi. To the north in Andromeda, look for NGC 7662, a ninth magnitude planetary nebula located one degree south and two degrees west of Iota Andromedae. It is an interesting spot of light with a hole in it, somewhat off center. And while you're in the area, look at M31, and notice the nuclear region carefully. It contains an almost starlike point of light, which is the nucleus itself. The degree to which it appears starlike depends on the size of telescope.

In Perseus, look at NGC 1039 (M34), a rather nice open cluster located  $4\frac{1}{3}$  degrees west and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  degrees north of Beta Persei. It is a beautiful group of stars, best seen under rather low power. Back in Andromeda, is one of the most beautiful binary systems in the sky, Gamma Andromedae. The closeness of this pair (3 seconds of arc) adds to the beauty. The bright yellow primary almost

drowns out the fainter blue secondary and gives the appearance of a large yellow star with a smaller blue one orbiting it.

Later on in the evening, more galaxies become visible. NGC 628 in Pisces (M74) is rather like a small version of M101, appearing as a small circular patch with a brighter spot in the center. It is located about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  degrees east of Eta Piscium. Nearby in Cetus is another Messier object, M77 (NGC 1068), located about one degree east of Delta Ceti. It is a member of the special class of galaxies known as Seyfert galaxies. The nuclei of these galaxies are centers of violent activity and are similar to quasars in that they show a relatively large redshift in their spectra.

--David Knisely

**PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE!**

*Do NOT send your membership renewals to the treasurer's home address! Send them to the club's post office box. Frequently, your treasurer is galavanting around the country, and leaves the depositing and the clerical work of getting subscriptions off to Sky & Tel to his secretary, who is very efficient. But when your renewals go into his personal mail, they sit-- along with bills, junk mail, poison pen letters and court summonses--awaiting his return. This can delay your renewal.*

*Send it to P.O. Box 30553!*

## HYDE OBSERVATORY DEDICATION (--from Page 1)

the equipment, and who would be responsible for picking up keys for use at the building, and for checking items to make sure that things are in good condition would be:

Ed Schmidt  
Merton Sprengle  
Carroll Moore  
Dale Rathe  
Jack Dunn  
Rick Johnson  
Earl Moser  
Larry Stepp  
Lee Thomas

These preliminary plans have not been formally accepted by the park board, but are expected to be confirmed prior to the dedication.

A schedule of public sky shows has been set up as follows:

November 6	Dedication
November 11	
November 14	
November 16	Leonid Meteor Shower
November 19	First Quarter Moon
December 3	Last Quarter Moon
December 13	Geminid Meteor Shower
December 16	First Quarter Moon

In case your friends ask, the procedure for scheduling a night for an organization to use the observatory is simply to call the Chet Ager Nature Center, which is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, Monday through Sunday. The number is 435-6145. Reservations must be made at least one week in advance.

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