



The Observer

October 2009 (#21)

Schedule of public programs on last page!

The Cincinnati Observatory “Scope Out”

A two-hour trip up Interstate 71 will take you to the Cincinnati Observatory. While there are a number of very nice observatories within an evening’s drive of Louisville, the Cincinnati Observatory is certainly one of the most interesting. If you are looking to get out under dark skies to see constellations, faint galaxies, and nebulae, then this observatory, located in the



The dome for the 16” Alvin Clark refractor at the Cincinnati Observatory. The dome slit is open to let in light.



THE UNIVERSE
YOURS TO DISCOVER

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
ASTRONOMY
2009



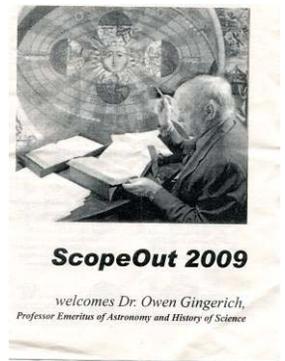
www.jefferson.kctcs.edu/observatory

middle of a big city, is not where you want to be. But if you want to see a lovely historical facility with fantastic telescopes and a strong educational program, the Cincinnati Observatory is worth the drive. And because there is so much to see in the way of telescopes and cool buildings, a trip to the Cincinnati Observatory will not be wasted even if the weather turns cloudy and there is nothing to see in the sky.

On September 12 the Cincinnati Observatory held its annual “Scope Out” event, a day with absolutely perfect weather. Chris Graney of Otter Creek-South Harrison Observatory attended the Scope Out and took the photographs shown here. The featured speaker at the Scope Out was Prof. Owen Gingerich of Harvard University and the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. Gingerich was an appropriate speaker to have at this historic observatory, during this historic International Year of Astronomy 2009, for he is one of the world’s most accomplished historians of astronomy. If you’ve ever seen an astronomy show on PBS, chances are you’ve seen Owen Gingerich. Gingerich spoke about Galileo and Kepler. (A video of Gingerich giving a talk similar to the talk he gave at Scope Out is available on-line at www.cfa.harvard.edu/smgdvl/cpn/Gingerich_CPN_podcast.mov)



The 11” Merz und Mahler refractor, built in 1843. The Cincinnati Observatory claims that this is “probably” the oldest continually used telescope in the world.

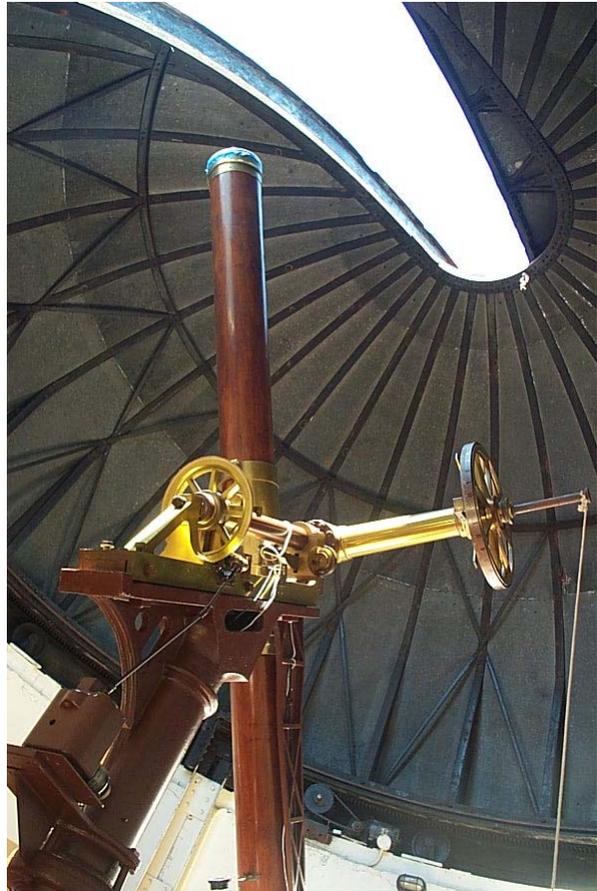


The Cincinnati Observatory is open to the public on a regular basis. The Observatory has lectures and telescope viewing (if the skies are clear) on most Thursday and Friday evenings, and is open for public stargazing one Saturday night per month. These events also feature a historical tour of the observatory and a discussion of the role that Cincinnati has played in the growth of astronomy in the United States. Reservations are required

(513-321-5186); programs will book up many weeks in advance. The Thursday programs are free, but there is a charge (\$5 adults/\$3 children under 18) on Fridays and Saturdays. Sunday afternoons feature extended historical tours of the observatory and have a \$2 charge, but no observing with the telescopes.



Two photos of a small Bausch & Lomb refractor.



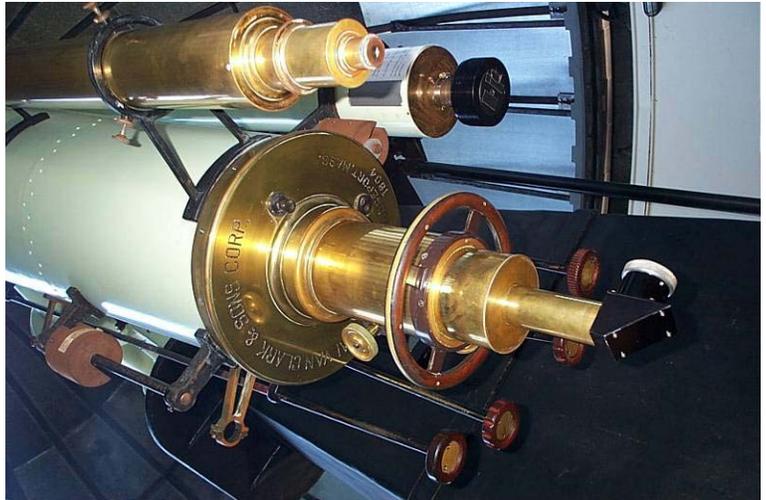
Another photo of the Merz und Mahler refractor.



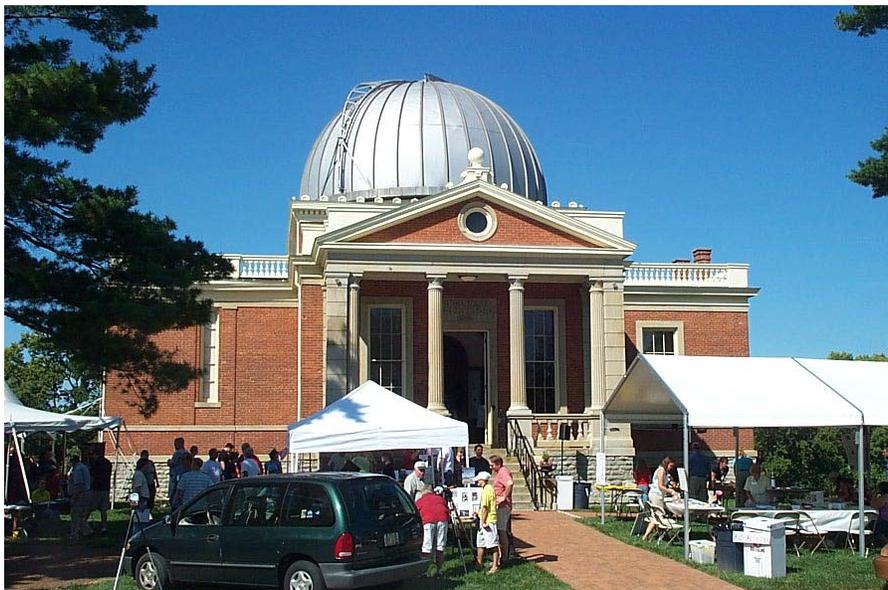
The Clark refractor. This telescope dates from 1904.



The mechanical drive mechanism on the Clark. The telescope tracks the stars, powered by this clock mechanism. The mechanism has a large weight that is raised up by a crank, like the weights on a cuckoo clock or grandfather clock. The weight gradually descends, powering the drive. No electricity!



The eyepiece end of the Clark. Old telescopes are a work of art. Yes, we have a 16" and an 11" telescope at Otter Creek-South Harrison, too. And in some ways they are superior to these old telescopes. But our 16" looks like this! → It is not a work of art.



The Clark dome from the front.



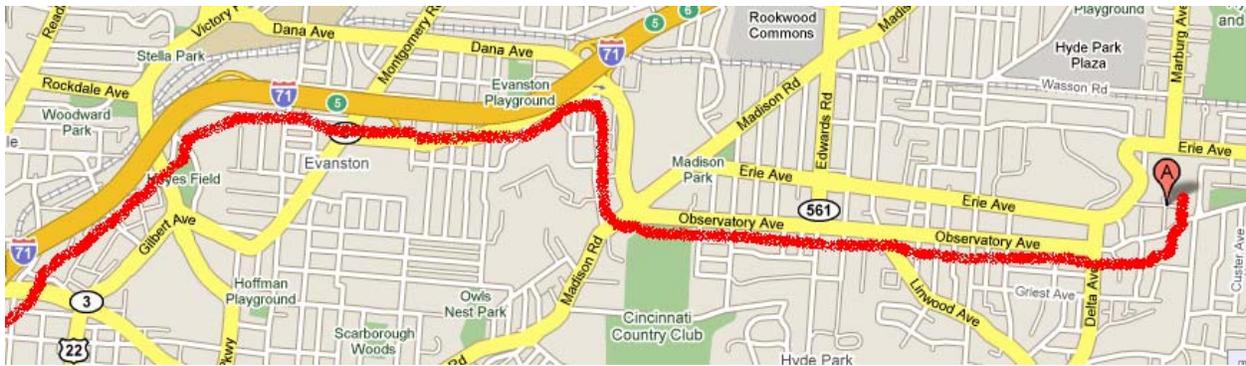
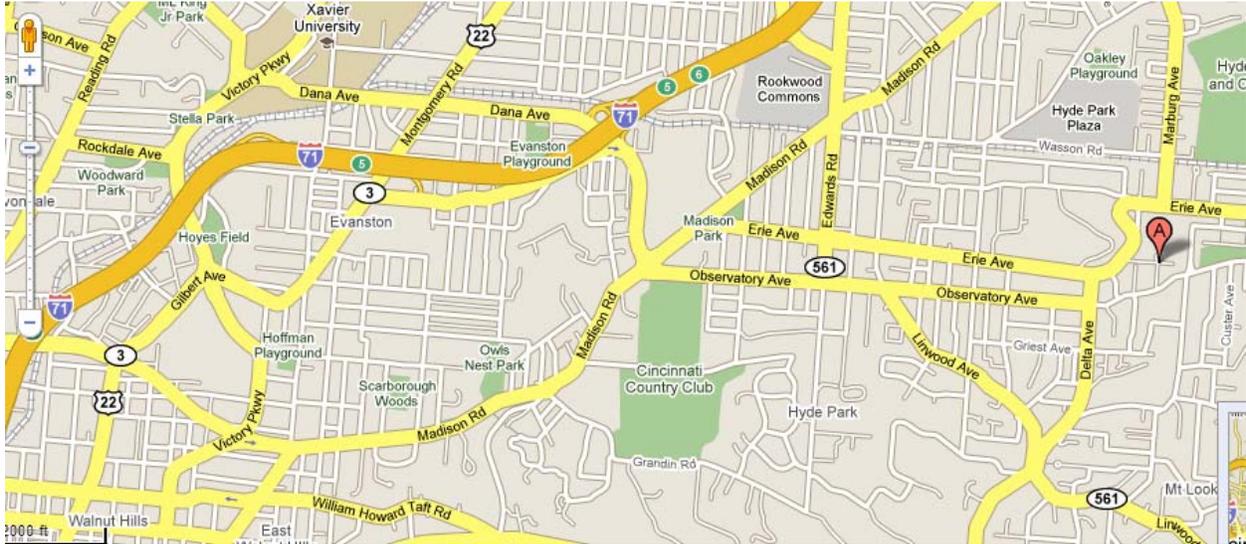
The dome here houses the Merz und Mahler. The cone-shaped roof houses the small Bausch & Lomb telescope.



Sun dial for explaining the sun and the seasons.



The observatory is easy to reach from Louisville. Follow I-71 into Cincinnati and exit at Dana Ave. Dana Ave becomes Observatory Ave, which takes you pretty much straight to the Observatory. There are signs on Observatory Ave once you start getting close to the Observatory.



Schedule of Public Programs:

Nighttime programs:

Oct. 17th 8:00 – 10:00 pm

Nov. 21st 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Dec. 12th 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Jan. 23rd 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Feb. 20th 7:30 – 9:30 pm

Daytime programs:

Oct. 10th 11 am to 1 pm

Nov. 7th 11 am to 1 pm

Dec. 5th 11 am to 1 pm

Jan. 9th 11 am to 1 pm

Feb. 6th 11 am to 1 pm

Mar. 6th 11 am to 1 pm

All programs at South Harrison Park are open rain or shine. Check with Park Astronomer, Park office, or websites below for updates.

*Contacts: Park Astronomer – Henry Sipes – 270-668-2103
Harrison County Park Office – 812-738-8236*

*Websites: <http://www.harrisoncoparks.com/Observatory.html>
<http://www.jefferson.kctcs.edu/observatory/>
<http://astronomy2009.us/>*

All times are Eastern time zone.

Nighttime programs: *Join the observatory staff for a tour of what is visible in the night sky, including the moon, stars, and planets.*

Daytime programs: *Daytime programs are "open house" at the observatory. Come safely observe the Sun, with its prominences and sunspots. Check out our telescopes and learn about the observatory -- after all, you can't really see what's in the observatory when it is dark.*