



R. A. C. NEWS

June - 2001

www.rocklandastronomy.com
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Observing and Meeting Locations

North Rockland High School Planetarium, Thiells, NY
Rockland Community College, Suffern, NY
Iron Horse Farm, Mike Pass, 914-496-6320, Campbell Hall, NY
*Anthony Wayne Recreation Area, Exit 17, Palisades Interstate Pkwy
*Lake Sebago, Seven Lakes Drive, Exit 16, Palisades Interstate Pkwy
*Silvermine Ski Area, Exit 18, Palisades Interstate Pkwy
*Wawayanda State Park, 973-853-4462, Highland Lakes, NJ
Tahgkanic State Park Taconic State Parkway, Ancram, NY

- *Special permits are required to observe.*

RAC SUMMER STAR PARTY

AUGUST 10 TO 19

SHADY PINES CAMPGROUND
SAVOY, MASSACHUSETTS

If you've already sent in your registration fee and campsite reservation deposit, thank you for making Don Urban's job just a bit easier.

If you are still trying to decide whether to make the commitment, what are you waiting for?

If you are asking yourself "What the heck is the Summer Star Party?" then you should contact Don Urban to find out! Ring his chimes at 201-768-3295 or send him an e-mail at DonUrban@RocklandAstronomy.com, and do it now!

And don't forget Stellafane on Friday and Saturday, August 17 - 18. It's only 90 miles up Interstate I-91 from the SSP.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Peter Aurelio 276 Fifth Ave. New Rochelle, NY 10801
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JUNE CALENDAR

This month begins “Mars at it’s best!”

June 15 – Observing a la Michael Pass at Iron Horse Farm.
Call Michael for directions (see calendar).

June 16 – Observing at Taghkanic State park.

June 22 – Waywayanda Observing.

June 23 – “Joy of the Universe” at Anthony Wayne.

BARLOW BOB’S CORNER

The Viking GPS

A written eyewitness record of a Viking raid on Dublin, Ireland, in the ninth century BCE, described how the people left their possessions and fled in terror when Viking ships appeared on the horizon at dawn. The thing that Europeans feared most, was the Vikings. Vikings were the premier amphibious assault force of their day (like Navy Seals with attitude).

One of the new products of the second millennium in 2000 was the GPS (Global Positioning System). This product has been purchased by amateur astronomers for the ultimate polar alignment of their telescopes. In the first millennium, from 871 to 1000, the Vikings sailed from Norway to Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland, Canada. The Vikings did this without the use of a compass or sextant, which were unknown at the time.

At that time, all European ships sailed along the coastline within sight of land, risking shipwreck. How did the Vikings sail as they did? The Vikings who raided Europe and their Norseman brothers who settled their new lands, promoting trade with Scandinavia, were fearless people.

The GPS principal could have originated with the Vikings. Sven, the Viking navigator, used the KISS principal (Keep It Simple Stupid). At sunset, facing north, he would hold up a stick – placing the horizon at the bottom and Polaris at the top. If he continued to do this, he could have sailed east or west along the same latitude. Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and Canada are located along the same latitude near the Arctic Circle.

The mineral lolite changes from brown to blue when turned in different directions. It has been suggested that this mineral was used in the Norseman’s Atlantic navigation to locate the Sun’s position in cloudy weather. The strongest polarization of sky light and the “blueist” color in the lolite is 90 degrees from the Sun.

In 871 the Vikings sailed from Norway to Iceland; in 982 Erik the Red settled Greenland; and Erik’s son, Leif Eriksson, set up camp in Newfoundland, Canada in 1000.

Norsemen from Norway attacked and settled England, Dublin, and Normandy (France). Swedish Norsemen traveled to Eastern Europe where the locals called them Russ. This could have been the origin of Russia. The Rurikids, 860-1598, were the first Russian royal dynasty. Modern Russians originate from the Eastern Slav who settled European Russia in the sixth century. Norsemen sailed from the Baltic Sea to establish a trade route from Scandinavia to Byzantium in Turkey.

The Vikings gave us some days of the week. Vikings had many different gods including Odin, Thor, Frey, and Tyr. From these four gods we get Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The word “berserk” comes from the Vikings. Before a raid, Vikings would put on a berserk coat, which included the head of a bear. They would work themselves into a frenzy to prepare for battle. Berserk is translated from the Viking word meaning “bear coat.”

The word “magnet” comes from the area of Italy where the lodestone natural magnets were found. It is said that Arab Nomads had a compass consisting of a bowl of mercury, with a lodestone needle floating on the mercury. (This could explain why Arab navigators died at a young age.) Around the edge of the bowl were marked with the directions of the compass. The word “compass” comes from these directions encompassing the bowl.

In 1405, Admiral Zheng He was sent by the Chinese emperor to visit Java, Sumatra, Sri Lanka, and India to introduce China. He took a great fleet of 317 ships manned by 970 men. Later, he visited the east coast of Africa. No fleet in the world could match his Chinese navy. The Chinese ocean-going junks were five-times the size of Vasco De Gamas’ ships (that sailed around the world seventy years later). The Chinese invented the compass and star chart.

The Viking age ended at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, however, modern Viking Norsemen still sail their Scandinavian container ships to promote trade and their cruise ships to bring tourists to peacefully explore Scandinavia.

These modern Vikings and amateur astronomers using GPS navigation instruments owe a debt of gratitude to Sven, the Viking navigator.

Today, when modern Scandinavian Viking cargo and cruise ships appear on the horizon at dawn in Dublin, bringing Volvos and tourists, they are welcomed by the Irish people.

Barlow Bob

Do YOU have an interesting piece of history or information you’d like printed? Of course you do. So, what are you waiting for? Send it to me, and I’ll put it in an upcoming issue.



ROCKLAND ASTRONOMY CLUB - (201) 768-3295

June 2001

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

3	Sunrise 05:25 Set 20:23 Moonset 04:06 Rise 17:58	4	Sunrise 05:25 Set 20:24 Moonset 04:37 Rise 19:05	5	Sunrise 05:25 Set 20:25 Moonset 05:12 Rise 20:09 ○ FM	6	Sunrise 05:24 Set 20:25 Moonset 05:52 Rise 21:10	7	Sunrise 05:24 Set 20:26 Moonset 06:37 Rise 22:05	8	Moonset 07:27 Rise 22:54	9	Sunrise 05:24 Set 20:27 Moonset 08:22 Rise 23:36
10	Sunrise 05:23 Set 20:27 Moonset 09:19 Rise ---	11	Sunrise 05:23 Set 20:28 Moonrise 00:13 Set 10:18	12	Moonrise 00:44 Set 11:17	13	Sunrise 05:23 Set 20:29 Moonrise 01:12 Set 12:16 ● LQ	14	Moonrise 01:38 Set 13:16	15	Sunrise 05:23 Set 20:30 Moonrise 02:05 Set 14:16 OBSERVING AT IRON HORSE FARM CALL MIKE AT 845-496-6320 FOR DIRECTIONS	16	Moonrise 02:28 Set 15:18 UP ALL NIGHT AT TAGHRANIC STATE PARK
17	Moonrise 02:54 Set 16:22 Father's Day	18	Sunrise 05:23 Set 20:31 Moonrise 03:24 Set 17:30	19	Sunrise 05:24 Set 20:31 Moonrise 03:58 Set 18:39	20	Moonrise 04:38 Set 19:50 OPHIUCHUS	21	Moonrise 05:28 Set 20:57 MARS AT OPPOSITION Summer Begins ● NM	22	Moonrise 06:27 Set 21:58 WAWAYANDA OBSERVING	23	Sunrise 05:24 Set 20:32 Moonrise 07:34 Set 22:50 JOT OF THE UNIVERSE AT ANTHONY WAYNE
24	Sunrise 05:25 Set 20:32 Moonrise 08:47 Set 23:34	25	Moonrise 10:01 Set ---	26	Moonset 00:11 Rise 11:15	27	Sunrise 05:26 Set 20:32 Moonset 00:43 Rise 12:26 ● FQ	28	Moonset 01:13 Rise 13:35	29	Sunrise 05:27 Set 20:32 Moonset 01:41 Rise 14:43	30	Moonset 02:09 Rise 15:50
PRIME OBSERVING WINDOW													
MARS AT ITS BEST!													
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MAKE RESERVATIONS NOW FOR RAC'S SUMMER STAR PARTY.