



## Menke Observatory Activity

Jeff Struve

I thought that I would write a blurb on the happenings at Menke Observatory... In particular, the status of the scope that we lent St. Ambrose until a replacement is obtained, and next, a word on their Unitron scope...

As you probably know, a few of us have diligently been working to help Dr. Mitchell move the Menke Observatory into the 21st century... dispose of their 80s Sky-Liner Newt/Cass on the wedged fork mount and into a new 14" SCT on a computer controlled mount. There was an intermediate step in that the old had to be sold before the new could be purchased... so what do we do in between scopes???

Solution... The QCAS will loan their 10" SCT until the new 14" can be procured.... This loan made it possible to disassemble the old scope and install the newly obtained Orion HDX110 computer controllable German Equatorial mount. This was important as it allowed us to design and install a pier and start the learning process as to how to work the new mount. It also helped in the potential sale of the old gear because disassembled, it was much easier to determine what size crates would be required and what the weights of each package would be... we are talking over 300 lbs of scope and mount here!

- After the new mount was worked on and installed, the QCAS' SCT was installed and further training continued...
- figuring out how to do an accurate polar align, and drift align
- how scope peculiarities impact this alignment
- how to use the hand controller for locating objects
- connecting up a computer and doing polar alignment
- drift aligning
- object location using the computer...
- connecting a camera,
- learning the imaging software and seeing how stable the tracking was with the new mount...
- a bit of displaying live images from the scope into the classroom on the TV monitor located in that room

Everyone involved seems very happy with the outcome, and I am sure that when the new 14" SCT is installed that this will provide far superior results than with our 10"... this being said, Dr. Mitchell should be taking possession of the new scope early in January at which time we will make the change...

The new scope will be quite a bit more stable than the 10', so we will have to do another polar alignment... but now, we can do a much more precise job which will allow much longer tracking... we will be doing a lot more fine tuning to make sure that the scope, dovetail, and mount are as perfectly adjusted as possible... I'm thinking we have a number of hours of work ahead of us, but I'm sure it will pay off.



# Newsletter of the Quad Cities Astronomical Society

www.qcas.org

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## January Skies

Matt Neilssen

At first glance, January is a poor month for astronomy in the QC. The weather is historically awful with subfreezing temps and clouds, clouds, clouds. There are however, a handful of cool things to look out for if the skies clear up.

**January 1st** is the expected date for Comet C/2013 X1 (PanSTARSS) to become observable in binos. This one will be tough. Just inside on the eastern edge of the Great Square in Andromeda, you may have a good shot at it if you're imaging. This dusty snowball is expected to reach nearly mag 6.

**January 4th** at 2:00am is the peak of the Quadrantid meteor shower. I always think of meteor showers radiating from a constellation. The Geminids come from Gemini, the Leonids from Leo, etc. But then where is Quadrant? Well, it used to be Quadrans Muralis. However, that designation is done for. If you're willing to hang out outdoors late enough, the expected ZHR is 120. Not too shabby.

**January 19th** 8:00pm there is another in a series of occultations of Aldebaran by the Moon. I still haven't witnessed one of these. This will be a decent one from our vantage point as the Moon is at 81% illumination and the dark region will pass over the star first perhaps making it actually "disappear". I have no clue what I'm working that day but if the sky is clear I will be outdoors for it.

Of course there is Comet C/2013 US10 Catalina. This is the month for this comet. It begins as an easy morning target near Arcturus before zipping up toward Alkaid and Mizar mid-month then bolting around Polaris as we work into February. This is the highlight of Jan 2016. Let's hope the skies cooperate!

Bonus: If you're imaging Catalina in the first week of the month near Arcturus, you may catch Comet 19/P Borrelley just above the orange giant in the morning. If you get this shot, let me know please!



Orion HDX110  
at Menke

# Calendar

Note: **Meetings** are at the Bettendorf Public Library @ 6:30 PM

Observatory **Open Houses** are at Sherman Park, Dixon (Calamus), IA

January 4  
Astronomy (dialogs) **Meeting**  
“Introduction to Telescopes”

January 18  
NO MEETING

February 1  
Astronomy (dialogs) **Meeting**  
“New Horizons/Pluto”

February 15  
Business/Astronomy **Meeting**

March 7  
Astronomy (dialogs) **Meeting**  
“Astronomical Influences in Numismatics”

March 21  
Business/Astronomy **Meeting**

April 4  
Astronomy (dialogs) **Meeting**  
Speaker from OMI

April 18  
Business/Astronomy **Meeting**

May 2  
Astronomy (dialogs) **Meeting**  
TBD

May 16  
Business/Astronomy **Meeting**

## Menke Continued...

As a side note, the Star-Liner has a new home with the Champaign Urbana Astronomical Society who will be restoring and placing this scope in one of their observatories that happens to house a few other vintage scopes...

Now on to the Unitron... at first, the thought was to market the scope, but then a bit of sentimental value started creeping in as the scope was the personal property of Monsignor Menke. I have pictures of it on Cloudy Nights forum asking questions about it, and many folks volunteered information as to what it was, and what parts and accessories should have come with it when it was new. The goal is to clean it up... get all the parts that can be located together... see how it works... then put it on display in the St Ambrose University library.

For information on the Star-Liner and research done, the link to the Cloudy Nights forum post is as follows:  
<http://www.cloudynights.com/topic/503729-star-liner-company/>

For information on the research being done on the Unitron, the link to the Cloudy Nights forum post is as follows:  
<http://www.cloudynights.com/topic/520181-unitron/>

Clear Skies in 2016!  
Jeff



1950s Unitron Model 160 Photo Equatorial



1980s Star-Liner



Celestron HD14 Edge



Champaign Urbana Astronomical Society

## QCAS Correspondence:

Please contact the society at: P.O. Box 3706, Davenport, IA, 52808.

Members are welcome and encouraged to submit articles for The Meridian. Submit any and all interesting items (via e-mail) to: Shawna Duncan, Secretary.

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