

REFLECTIONS / REFRACTIONS

University Lowbrow
Astronomers

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The Transit of Venus: Lowbrows and the 2012 Event

Editors note: Lowbrows far and wide, at numerous venues, brought the 2012 Venus transit to hundreds of individuals making the club a focus of a major cultural event. Reporting on these efforts will be spread over the next several issues of Reflections.

A Medley of Lowbrows Venus 2012 Observing Reports

Collected by Chris Sarnecki

A big **THANKS again** to all who contributed in the second ever combined Lowbrow Venus Transit report. (See the first Lowbrows' 2004 Venus Transit report at - <http://www.umich.edu/~lowbrows/reflections/2004/venus.html>). How often does one get to see two Venus transits in a lifetime? The second time around I decided to observe at Leslie Park, same as in 2004. The weather cooperated back then, so I hoped it would cooperate again. Well, it did. The weather for the June 5th Venus transit was touch-and-go at first contact, but by second contact the sky did clear up and remained clear for most of the evening. What an event this was. Our Lowbrows at Leslie Park hosted a steady stream of local residents and others that traveled to the park for a chance to see Venus dance across the disk of old Sol. It was a little strange having a 'star' party during daylight. Like most of you that saw this, we observed the Sun until it dived below the horizon. Sweeet!

This report is a little different than the 2004 report in that it is laced with lots of hyperlinks of photo collections by our assembled membership. So grab your mouse, and be prepared to 'click' and read through these observation reports. - Chris Sarnecki



Ok, so I have to get this picture out of the way fiirst. A handheld i-phone picture through an 8-inch dob stepped down to 3-inches. Pretty nice pic if I say so myself.

Dave Snyder, Lowbrow Webmaster extraordinaire writes...

(Dave sent out an e-mail on June 1st in preparation for the big day.)

Reminder: we have several Venus Transit venues in the immediate area, so not everyone needs to go to the same place...

Angell Hall

Ashley Street

The Detroit Observatory

Ann Arbor District Library, Traverwood Branch

Leslie Park

Sherzer Observatory

(A gaggle of Lowbrows also 'observed' at Kensington Metro Park)

Dave collected and organized our Lowbrow photos at:

<http://www.umich.edu/~lowbrows/album/venus-2012/>

I first got interested in Venus transits 12 years ago (in the year 2000) when I got this email...

Greetings from Princeton -- I just wanted to let you know that Eli Maor who is the author of a new book on the transits of venus will be speaking at Borders Books on Liberty Street this coming week July 13th at 7:00 PM.

I went to Borders, met Dr. Maor and bought a copy of his book (which I still own). However I had to wait four years to actually see a transit (which was a memorable experience, more so than I would have expected).

After another eight years, we had another memorable experience. The afternoon of June 5, 2012 was cloudy, but the weather gods cooperated and the clouds parted before the start of the transit. We planned this Venus Transit better than the last one, having set aside several sites for viewing.

I joined a group of Lowbrows who set up on Ashley Street. We had lots of visitors, and I lost track of how many people I talked with, how many questions I answered. Other Lowbrows have mentioned that "gigs like yesterday renew ones' enthusiasm for public events". At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I agree. For me the best part of this was helping to share a unique experience with so many different people. My favorite experience was a young girl who was looking through Mike Radwick's telescope. I took a photograph of her. I had remarked that she might just be able to live long enough to see the next transit; she responded that she'd like to live a hundred years



The Lowbrow observing crew from Ashley Street -- Doug Scobel, Mike Radwick, Amy Cantu, Jack Brisbin, John Wallbank, Paul Juska, Dave Snyder and John Causland.

Antique Spyglass Confirms Transit of Venus

By Jack Brisbin



The spyglass was imported from France and sold in the U.S in 1889. I acquired the spyglass at an astronomy conference and have had it for many years. I built an observing frame so the spyglass could be used by the public with some restrictions. I attached one of my binocular solar filters to the front of the frame. The spyglass is about 120+ years old..... *The public loved it!*

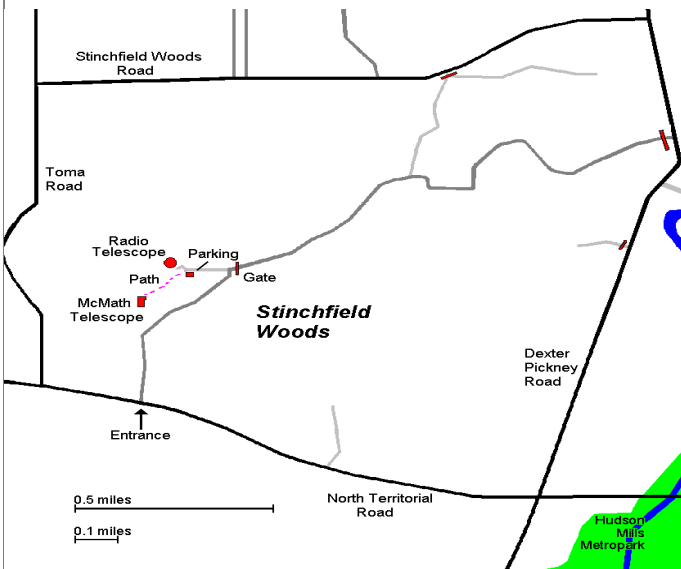


As people strolled up and down Ashley Street the antique spyglass captured their attention and interest. Once they looked, they were hooked. How surprised they were to view Venus and the Sunspots. Not to mention the return requests to see how far Venus had moved across the sun. Even the kids returned to look and see if it was "still there". Some of the local antique buffs were impressed with the image quality and continued to stay and observe. When you explain it to the public, that you won't see this again until 2117, they realize they are part of a once in a lifetime event.

Places & Times

Dennison Hall, also known as The University of Michigan's Physics & Astronomy building, is the site of the monthly meeting of the University Lowbrow Astronomers. Dennison Hall can be found on Church Street about one block north of South University Avenue in Ann Arbor, MI. The meetings are usually held in room 130, and on the 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30 pm. During the summer months and when weather permits, a club observing session at the Peach Mountain Observatory will follow the meeting.

Peach Mountain Observatory is the home of the University of Michigan's 25 meter radio telescope as well as the University's McMath 24" telescope which is maintained and operated by the Lowbrows. The observatory is located northwest of Dexter, MI; the entrance is on North Territorial Rd. 1.1 miles west of Dexter-Pinckney Rd. A small maize & blue sign on the north side of the road marks the gate. Follow the gravel road to the top of the hill and a parking area near the radio telescopes, then walk along the path between the two fenced in areas (about 300 feet) to reach the McMath telescope building.



Public Open House / Star Parties

Public Open Houses / Star Parties are generally held on the Saturdays before and after the New Moon at the Peach Mountain observatory, but are usually cancelled if the sky is cloudy at sunset or the temperature is below 10 degrees F. For the most up to date info on the Open House / Star Party status call: (734)332-9132. Many members bring their telescope to share with the public and visitors are welcome to do the same. Peach Mountain is home to millions of hungry mosquitoes, so apply bug repellent, and it can get rather cold at night, please dress accordingly.

Membership

Membership dues in the University Lowbrow Astronomers are \$20 per year for individuals or families, \$12 per year for students and seniors (age 55+) and \$5 if you live outside of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

This entitles you to the access to our monthly Newsletters on-line at our website and use of the 24" McMath telescope (after some training).

A hard copy of the Newsletter can be obtained with an additional \$12 annual fee to cover printing and postage.

(See the website

<http://www.umich.edu/~lowbrows/theclub/>

for more information on joining the club).

Membership in the Lowbrows can also get you a discount on these magazine subscriptions:

Sky & Telescope - \$32.95 / year

Astronomy - \$34.00 / year or \$60.00 for 2 years

For more information contact the club Treasurer.

Newsletter Contributions

Members and (non-members) are encouraged to write about any astronomy related topic of interest.



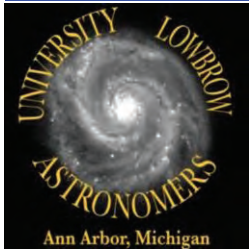
Lowbrow's Home Page

<http://www.umich.edu/~lowbrows/>



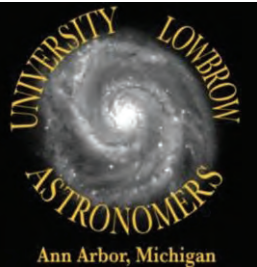
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Website

www.umich.edu/~lowbrows/



My Backpacker/sunfunnel combo worked splendidly! Besides letting more than one person look at one time, dozens of folks snapped pictures of the transit using their cell phones. The larger black dot at the lower left, just inside the sun's disk, is Venus's silhouette. The smaller, less distinct spots on the sun are sunspots.

--Doug Scobel