

# Friends of the Observatory

Issue #31 March 2020

Spring equinox



*Trees, towers, domes, and temples lie,  
In open cluster to the sky.*

## How to Contribute

Your support has contributed to the preservation of the Observatory and the telescope. Your continued assistance is appreciated. Gifts can be made through the Illinois Foundation. To learn how to donate, please visit the web site below for details:

<https://astro.illinois.edu/giving/give>

Old places embody our identity.  
Old places are who we are.  
They give us a sense of self.  
They tell us who we are as a  
people.

“Why do old places matter? Individual Identity”

Blog post, Tom Mayes, 1/8/2014

<https://forum.savingplaces.org/blogs/forum-online>



## Identity

Quote from the AAS document “Preservation of our astronomical heritage” by Working Group on the Preservation of American Astronomical Heritage, 2019.

“Throughout the ages, astronomy has extensive and well-documented legacy that can best be described as ‘new tools, new universes.’ Whenever we have enhanced our tools of perception, from the eye, to the telescope, and then adding photography, spectroscopy, and electronic and digital technologies to the telescope, our understanding of what the universe is has changed in revolutionary ways. Preserving these tools is essential to appreciating how our concept of what the universe is, and where we are in it, has changed. . . Today’s professionals have a responsibility to their predecessors and their successors to conserve this legacy and ensure that it remains available to future scientists and historians of science. Thus, the preservation and utilization of these materials should be an integral part of the strategic plan for American astronomy in the coming decade.”

### BOARD MEMBERS

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The photograph shows the display at the Alice Campbell Alumni Center in Urbana that highlights the Observatory and the features one of Jakob Kunz’s photoelectric cells from the Observatory’s collection. Within the Alumni Center, the Richmond Family Welcome center includes 14 discovery boxes. The interactive displays are rotated every year so be sure to visit soon.





## Open Houses.

Some photographs from Facebook that tagged the Observatory. The top picture shows an October 2019 visit to the exhibit room by Newman Hall residences. The middle picture is a 2018 visit by SACNAS - Advancing Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science. The 6-inch refractor in the foyer is a popular selfie location after taking in the beauty of Jupiter (from August open house).



## Classroom Wall Update

In the last newsletter the Friends committed to working with the Astronomy Department to remove an existing wall and creating a larger classroom space. **We have raised over 63% of the required funds!** Thank you for your support! We still need to raising ~\$6000 to full fund the removal. We will continue to work with Astronomy and the university and hope to have the work completed this summer.



## Astro[sound]bites

In case you have some spare time or are working from home, you might want to listen into an astronomy podcast. Go to <https://astrosoundbites.podbean.com/>

It is hosted by UIUC's Alex Gagliano. You can find it on Spotify, Google Play, Soundcloud, or Apple Music.

# Heartbeat of the Observatory

## Keeping the clocks ticking

Nineteenth Century astronomy was focused on the precision measurement of the location of stars. Knowing the exact time was essential. At the heart of every observatory were precision clocks; one for sidereal time, one for local time.

Over the last several years, **Professor emeritus Bruce Hannon** has restored and cleaned the Observatory's clocks. One of the first Friend's funded projects was the restoration of the Self Winding Clock in 2011. This 1917 clock is an example of a slave clock that was connected to a master clock. For a brief period in the late 1890s, the university's master clock was in the Observatory controlling slave clocks like this one across campus. This clock now runs continuously in the exhibit room.

More recently Dr. Hannon has cleaned the two IBM master clocks from 1954 that hang in the clock room. The local time clock is used for demonstrations during open houses and is connected to the chronograph. The sidereal clock has been missing its pendulum since the early 1980s but we are keeping an eye out for a replacement.



Detail of the Self-Winding Clock.



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on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/U.of.Illinois.Observatory/>

and see the Observatory instrument collection at

<https://uiobservatory.omeka.net/>