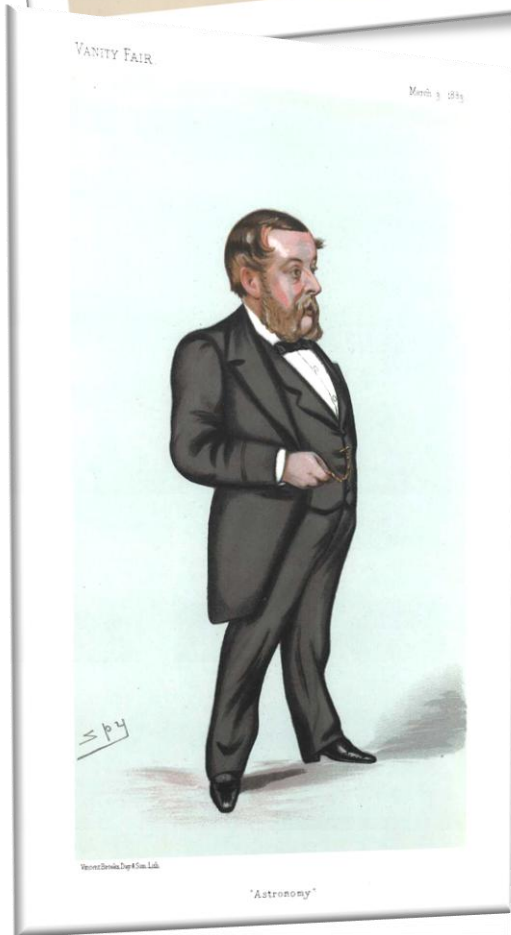




RASC History Committee Report

NAC152

2015 June



DONATIONS

The Archives have received a generous donation from Committee member Peter Broughton of two *Vanity Fair* caricatures of astronomers, One, dated 1875 November 13, is of Sir George Biddell Airy (1801-1892), seventh Astronomer Royal (1835-1881; see cover, top figure). The second, from 1883 March 3, depicts Richard Anthony Proctor (1837-1888), the most prominent Victorian populariser of astronomy in his day, a populariser who nevertheless made original contributions to science (see cover, bottom figure). Both are large format chromolithographs. The first is no. 115 from the series "Men of the Day", and the second is no. 277. They are both signed "Spy", the *nom de crayon* of the prolific and influential satirical artist Sir Leslie Ward (1851-1922).

Vanity Fair (the real *Vanity Fair*), "A Weekly Show of Political, Social and Literary Wares", enjoyed a reputation as a mildly satirical publication not adverse to fashion, and ran from 1868-1914 (thus sharing one foundation date with our Society). The periodical is chiefly remembered today for its satirical chromolithographs. Of the approximately two thousand which were produced, six were of astronomers; in addition to Airy and Proctor, Sir William Huggins, Sir Robert Ball, and Lord Lindsay were depicted (the latter twice, once as Lord Lindsay, and the second time as the Earl of Crawford). Lord Lindsay aside, the others all had some RASC connections (whether they were aware of them or not); Huggins, Ball, and Proctor's daughter Mary were honorary members, Proctor's grand nephew D.R.P. Coats (1892-1973) belonged to the RASC for over fifty years (Broughton, *Looking Up* [Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1994], p. 198), and Airy and Proctor were both highly respected authorities in the eyes of early Society members.

There is a fittingness to Airy and Proctor entering our Archives together. Both were the principals in a famous dispute about the design of the British transit of Venus campaigns (1874 & 1882; rasc.ca/sir-gb-airys-1868-map-possible-to-v-stations-i)!

The *Vanity Fair* caricatures were published with jocular texts, some more successful than others. That accompanying Airy's portrait is cringingly sycophantic. The text for Proctor is actually funny:

"When Mr. Proctor went to Cambridge College over twenty years ago, he had no thought of becoming a prophet...Having lost his fortune, he settled down to steady work, and to beguile the world, he wrote a little treatise on cycloids which is the best thing of its kind ever done by an English mathematician. Eighty people in the world rushed upon this book and bought it; but, so far from being satisfied with this unprecedented appreciation of his years of labour, Mr. Proctor declared he would have a larger audience. He therefore devoted himself to astronomy...He is five-and-forty years of age, he has invented a new theory of the universe, and he is afraid of growing fat".

RANKING OF 2015 & 2018 ANNIVERSARY PROJECTS

At the previous meeting of Council (NAC151 on 2015 March 21) the green paper "Looking Up for 150 Years: Possible Projects for RASC Anniversaries 2015 & 2018" was presented (https://www.rasc.ca/sites/default/files/NAC151_2015and2018_Projects.pdf). Councillors, Directors, and all Society members were specifically invited *viva voce* and within the document itself (p. 2) to convey to the Society their preferences among the possible projects. Aside from members of this committee, none did so at the time, and it would appear that none have done so since, at least formally. The chair of the Membership & Development Committee helpfully suggested that the author of the report might make a selection from among the projects, and rank them. Such a ranking is found below. The selection is determined by relative importance, connection to what the Society has done and its present activities, relation to other aspects of Canadian culture, and feasibility. The closer a project is to the top of each table, the higher is its ranking. The numbers in column 1 of each table are the project numbers assigned in the original green paper.

Table 1. 2015 anniversary projects ranking

<i>rank</i>	<i>title</i>	<i>description*</i>
2	issuing a publication highlighting some aspect of our heritage	p. 3
1	obtaining Royal patronage for the RASC	p.3
3	initiating a joint project with the CASCA Heritage Committee to further the awareness of Canada's astronomical history and heritage and its preservation	pp. 3-4

*for details of the projects, refer to "Looking Up for 150 Years: Possible Projects for RASC Anniversaries 2015 & 2018"

Table 2. 2018 anniversary project ranking

<i>rank</i>	<i>title</i>	<i>description*</i>
1	an update of <i>Astronomy in Canada: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow</i> - symposium & publication	p. 4
7	exhibition to celebrate the RASC's heritage	p. 7
8	RASC anniversary imaging competition	pp. 7-8
3	an EPO project melding modern science and astronomical heritage	pp. 4-5
4	a modern observational project with historical depth, to challenge observers (or imagers) to see in new ways	pp. 5-6

*for details of the projects, refer to "Looking Up for 150 Years: Possible Projects for RASC Anniversaries 2015 & 2018"

As was remarked four months ago: "None of these proposals are written in stone...There are doubtless other worthwhile initiatives which could be considered in addition to those mentioned here, and members are encouraged to mould their own insights and interests into projects at the personal, centre, multi-centre, or national level" ("Looking Up for 150 Years: Possible Projects for RASC Anniversaries 2015 & 2018", p.2).

RASC YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Progress on populating the RASC YouTube channel has been held up for several months due to some administration issues. Thanks to the persistence of RASC Webmaster Walter MacDonald (Kingston Centre), and the cooperation of members of the IT Committee (under whose aegis the channel falls), the issues seem to be resolved.

Some Society members will recall the media program "Astronomy Toronto", which highlighted interviews with various astronomical figures—prominent amateurs and professional astronomers, and those involved with aeronautics—and ran from 1981-1989. The producer and host of the program, Randy Attwood, has generously offered the entire run for posting on the Society's YouTube channel. Randy Attwood's reminiscences about making the series can be read at: <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/1988JRASC..82...85A>.

DDO 80TH ANNIVERSARY

To mark the 80th anniversary of the official opening of the David Dunlap Observatory (1935 May 31), the RASC Toronto Centre and the Dunlap Institute for Astronomy & Astrophysics of the University of Toronto collaborated on an event featuring a symposium with presentations by former staff (e.g., Ernie Seaquist and Christine Clement among others), and current staff (e.g., Paul Mortfield), and a specially curated exhibition of historical artifacts associated with the observatory. The RASC Archives was a minor lender, loaning our painting of C.A. Chant, and the services of our Archivist. Several committee members attended the event over the weekend of June 13-14 (Peter Broughton, Clark Muir, and Eric Briggs). By all accounts the event was worthwhile.



HALIFAX ASTRONOMICAL HISTORY & HERITAGE

The Committee has produced an illustrated brochure as an introduction to the astronomical history and heritage of Halifax. Meant in the first instance for GA delegates, it can also serve the purposes of any scientifically inclined tourist. It will be available shortly in electronic form on rasc.ca. If the response is positive, we may do this for other GA host cities. It could prove a useful means to provide access to the varied astronomical landscape of Canada. We are grateful to Dr. Randall Brooks (Halifax Centre) for assistance in checking the text of the brochure.



CASCA ARCHIVES

At the CASCA 2015 annual meeting at McMaster in Hamilton, during the Heritage Committee consultation, the RASC Archivist was asked by the Chair of the CASCA Committee if the RASC Archives were able and willing to provide a physical home for the CASCA Archives. This request was brought to the RASC History Committee, which unanimously agreed to the request of our partner organization. The logistics and particulars of the arrangement have yet to be finalized.

PUBLICATIONS

R.A. Rosenfeld, "Inviting the Right Aliens to Tea—the State of the Question at the Victoria Centre, 1931", *JRASC* 109 3 (2015 June), 113-117, 120-122

R.A. Rosenfeld & Lee Robbins, *The David Dunlap Observatory (DDO) at 80: the artifacts of doing astronomy*, exhibition catalogue 2015 June 13-14 (Toronto)

PRESENTATIONS

Clark Muir, "The Vatican Mirrors", Sudbury Astronomy Club, Doran Planetarium, Laurentian University, 2015 April 10

Clark Muir, "The Vatican Mirrors ", Kitchener-Waterloo Centre, StarGazing 101, Zehrs Community Room- Laurentian Power Centre, 2015 May 22

R.L. Bishop, "Captain Cook—Navigator Extraordinaire", Athenaeum Society of Nova Scotia, Northwest Cove, 2015 June 21

R.A. Rosenfeld, "The Long Road to the Dome on Observatory Hill...", DDO 80th Symposium, Administration Building, DDO Richmond Hill, 2015 June 13

OTHER ACTIVITY

Dr. Chris Gainor continues with his work as PI on the project to write the official NASA history of the operational history of the Hubble Space Telescope, and compile a HST history archive.

Among other projects, Clark Muir is gathering the final materials to put the fascinating saga of the ill-fated 1903 Montreal Jesuit/1960s Laurentian 20-inch reflector into print.

Heather Laird has been elected by acclamation to the RASC Board of Directors, and Eric Briggs has volunteered to be the recorder of the National Advisory Council. Their willingness to sacrifice themselves (figuratively) on Urania's alter is much appreciated.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Julia Neeser, RASC Marketing Coordinator, Renata Koziol, Office Administrator, and Randy Attwood, FRAS, Executive Director, for assistance during the period covered by this report. Thanks as ever is due to the RASC Webmaster, Walter MacDonald, for looking out for the best ways to ensure access to our historical materials.

Respectfully submitted,

R.A. Rosenfeld, Chair

Committee Members:

- *Randy Attwood, FRASC (ED)
- Dr. Roy Bishop, FRASC (Halifax)
- Eric Briggs (Toronto)
- Peter Broughton, FRASC (Toronto)
- Robert Duff (London)
- *James Edgar ex officio (President, Regina)
- Dr. Chris Gainor (Victoria)
- *Dr. Robert Garrison (Toronto, consultant)
- *Renata Koziol (Office Administrator)
- Heather Laird (Calgary)
- Clark Muir (Kitchener-Waterloo)
- Randall Rosenfeld (Unattached), Chair

*=non-voting members