

The Big Ear and Perkins Observatory

Do you love to stare at the stars at night? Have you visited the Perkins



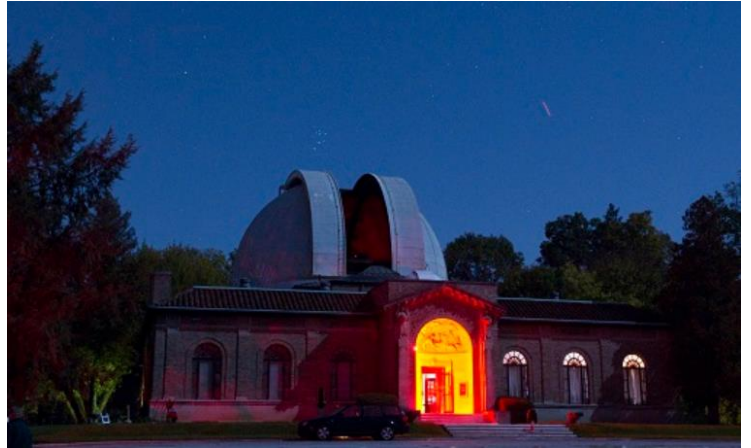
Observatory on SR 23 south of Delaware? This site is the second observatory built in Delaware. On a cloudless night go outside and look at the sky. What do you see? What colors are the stars? Can you find a constellation? Have you seen the International Space Station travel across the sky? There is so much to see and learn about space and the night sky. Hiram Perkins felt the same way.

Mr. Perkins was born in Madison County, Ohio in 1833. He went to college at the Ohio Wesleyan University and then became a professor of mathematics and astronomy there. During the Civil War he was unable to serve in the army, so he went home to raise hogs to sell as meat to the soldiers. This job was highly profitable. At the end of the war, he returned to Ohio Wesleyan as a teacher, and soon donated much of his fortune to OWU. With his donation, the school built an observatory. This observatory was next to his house on 235 West William Street and became known as the Student Observatory.



Several years later a larger observatory was built, now called the Perkins Observatory. In 1931 it was the third largest telescope in the world. The Ohio State University partnered with OWU to support the astronomical observations. In the 1960s the telescope was moved to the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona where the sky is less cloudy and there is less light pollution. More stars were visible from the Arizona mountain top.

A radio telescope, known as the Big Ear, was built on the grounds of the Perkins Observatory. It began listening to outer space in 1963 and continued until 1998. It is best known for recording the WOW!, “an unusual and apparently extraterrestrial radio signal¹” or a loud sound recorded in 1977. It remains unclear as to where the sound originated and hasn’t been heard again.



Perkins Observatory continues to offer programs for families. You can look on the Perkins website at <http://perkins.owu.edu/> for a schedule of events, the current phase of the moon, the prediction of the night sky for viewing, and solar activity. During this time of COVID-19, there are virtual Observing/Planetarium Shows offered on Friday evenings.

Look at the stars. Imagine how all the stars in the sky. Why are they bluish or yellow? Can you find the North Star? Can you see the constellations?

Make a Star Finder

<https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/starfinder/en/>

Draw the constellations you can identify.

Ask your parents to download the free app, *Skyview*, which helps you see the constellations in the night sky.

Download a book with descriptions of constellations.

<https://www.startwithabook.org/sites/default/files/SpaceRangers-stars-constellations.pdf>

Fun Constellation Sewing Cards – Stargazing With Kids

Download free sewing constellation cards- Need yarn, a hole punch and a kid-safe needle
Kidsactivities.com

<https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/53553/star-sewing-cards-kids/>

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ohio_State_University_Radio_Observatory

<http://perkins.owu.edu/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perkins_Observatory

<https://astrobackyard.com/ursa-major-constellation/>