

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL  
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA  
JOURNAL DE LA SOCIÉTÉ ROYALE  
D'ASTRONOMIE DU CANADA

Vol. 82, No. 4

AUGUST 1988

Whole No. 613

ORIGINS OF CANADIAN RADIO ASTRONOMY\*

BY ARTHUR E. COVINGTON  
*National Research Council, Ottawa, Ontario*

(Received May 4, 1988)

ABSTRACT

Radar technology after World War II was rapidly applied to the radio astronomy founded by Jansky and Reber. The first post-war discoveries in various countries from 1945 to 1950 were made with instruments built from surplus parts, and quickly led to the design of specialized equipment. The development in Ottawa at the Laboratories of the National Research Council is outlined, initially for solar radio observations and then for the early galactic observations at the Goth Hill Radio Observatory, near Ottawa.

*Pre-War and War Years.* My introduction to radio astronomy occurred sometime in 1939–40 while I was browsing through journals at the U.B.C. library. Although I cannot recall the name of the author or journal, as an amateur telescope maker I was impressed with the size of the 31-ft telescope illustrated in the article. One of the many photographs of Reber's radio telescope taken in that era is shown in figure 1. It was discussed with two friends† belonging to the Vancouver Centre of

\*One of the papers presented at the conference held in Ottawa, December 22, 1987, to celebrate Grote Reber's 76th birthday (see p. 93 of the June JOURNAL).

†J. Roy. Astr. Soc. Canada 27, 119, 1933. W. Stothard attended a regular meeting of the Vancouver Centre, and C.F. MacKenzie, p. 397, held a garden party for members. Charles' superbly equipped basement included an oil diffusion pump. Bill made acquaintance with him as the one who had "Telescope Making" on continuing loan from the Carnegie Library. Gordon M. Shrum and Dean Buchanan had undertaken to form the Vancouver Centre the year before. Both were to become my professors of Physics and Maths when I entered U.B.C. in 1935 and graduated in 1938. I was fortunate to have taken Shrum's well known course in Physical Optics the last year he gave it and learnt about his identification of the auroral green line. A gathering of Professor Shrum and a few of his students at the home of Professor A.M. Crooker, sometime in 1939 was photographically recorded by W.M. Barss.

To Alan Bridle  
With Best  
Wishes

Arthur E  
Covington

Kingston

Dec

1988

P.S. It is strange that

H.E. Parsons is cousin to

J.S. Parsons of Herz's group.

Sullivan told me that has interviewed J.S. Parsons recently!