

Mason Dixon 2007

Hi all,

Just got back a little bit ago from the Mason-Dixon Starparty.

<http://masondixonstarparty.org/>

(actually left the convention grounds at 10:00 am, but spent the day exploring the York area toward the Maryland border).

According to the York club members, this was one of the biggest conventions they've ever had! Didn't get the final tally of attendees, but there must have been well over 300 there, based on the number of camps. Representing the AAAP were Bob Kalan, Bob Novak, John O'Hare, and myself. Also a number of folks from other West Pa clubs. Burgess was the main vendor present, along with May's Munchables! There was a good selection of raffle prizes with the two 'biggies' being an Astroscan and a Coronado PST! (both of the 'Bobs' won a prize!).

The convention site is a small grass airport (closed for the weekend), and had good horizons and a very flat/level field, which made for easy walking around at night. There is a bunkhouse, flush restrooms with showers, and a nice pool.

The speaker presentations were held down near the pool clubhouse in a finished barn. I only made it to two of the talks. "How Far Can You See?" by John Goss Chair of the Mid East Region of the Astronomical League, and "The Astronomy of Mason and Dixon" by Bob Mentzer, a retired science teacher from the area. (the second talk was really interesting on the details of how they were able to run the boundary line thru hundreds of miles of wilderness with such great accuracy).

The observing field had the usual assortment of equipment one would see at a starparty convention, but there seemed to be more dobs than anything. The highlight had to be a monster 300mm TAK RCT, piggybacking 102mm & 80mm TAK refractors on a humongous TAK German EQ mount! (you should have seen the image he took Saturday nite of M31. Even the satellite galaxies were showing dustlane details).

I wasn't able to successfully image anything, as 'Mr Murphy' paid an extended visit to my equipment! (everything that could go wrong did!)

Finally, I really couldn't get a good feel for what the skies there are like.

Friday afternoon, it clouded over and even sprinkled a little. It didn't start to clear until sometime after 2:00 am. Saturday was good for solar observing, but the clouds started building again after lunch, making it difficult.

I did get my Coronado PST & CaK running split video feeds to my monitor for a several hour stretch. Saturday evening, the clouds dissipated, but a lot of haze and humidity remained, giving the sky a soft dull look. It also greatly enhanced the light domes from Harrisburg to the North, York to the East, and even Gettysburg to the South showed! (Both Bobs agreed that it was a bad night, and it was usually much darker there). As they say, "youse pays yer money and take yer chances", which is especially true with starparty conventions in the NorthEast USA!

Larry