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2012 June 5-6
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OTHER HISTORY

Paine's Footnote on the Transit of Venus

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Robert Havlik, Librarian Emeritus, University of Notre Dame



Thomas Paine (1737 -1809) was an English-born American political figure, philosopher, and author of Footnote on the Transit of Venus. The works of Thomas Paine are said to have influenced many of the founders of the United States. Paine's <u>The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology</u>, 1794-96, was the results of Paine's years of study and reflection on the place of religion in society. It was very popular and controversial in its time. It also touches on Paine's interest in science and astronomy. The work is still in print.

The excerpt below is part of Paine's introduction to his theories on the plurality of worlds. In it he describes the planetary system, as known at the time, in terms of Kepler's Laws. He then uses the observation of the Transit of Venus as a practical application of the laws. Paine's footnote #11 is presented below in **BOLD** for emphasis.

Read more: Paine's Footnote on the Transit of Venus

Miscellaneous ToV Items

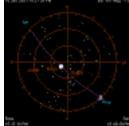
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A hodge-podge of material is related to the transit of Venus. Some of it is grand; some is trivial. Feel free to send us any links.

Note: This content may later be relocated within website.

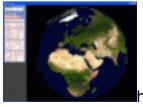
http://www.phys.uu.nl/~vgent/venus/venustransitbib.htm

Extensive bibliography of original sources relating to transits of Venus, with links to many of the original publications; from R.H. van Gent.



http://iss-transit.sourceforge.net/

Thomas Fly offers a way for observers to predict when the International Space Station (ISS) will pass in front of the sun or moon from their respective observing sites. The **Transit Alert** service will ideally send notices of predicted transits of the ISS..



http://iss-transit.sourceforge.net/lssVenusTransit.html

Trying to predict where the International Space Station (ISS) will be during the transit of Venus, and the possibility of seeing ISS transit the sun concurrently with Venus; from Thomas Fly.



ttp://sio.midco.net/dansmapstamps/jamescook.htm

Collection of stamps pertaining to Captain James Cook, including some specific to the 1769 transit of Venus.

Read more: Miscellaneous ToV Items

Links: Other History

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http://www.transitofvenus.nl/history.html

Historical observations of the transit of Venus, from Steven van Roode.

Thorough overview of places where the transit of Venus has been observed in the past and which I could identify using Google Earth. The stations are listed by sponsoring country and nationality, following the longitudinal position from west to east. Many entries have links to primary sources.

http://www.phys.uu.nl/~vgent/venus/venustransitbib.htm

Extensive bibliography of original sources relating to transits of Venus, with links to many of the original publications; from R.H. van Gent.

http://eclipse-maps.com/Eclipse-Maps/Transits.html

Historical transit of Venus maps by Michael Zeiler, with emphasis on Richard Proctor's maps.

http://image.gsfc.nasa.gov/poetry/venus/VT8.html

NASA's Sten Odenwald notes some possible sightings of the transit of Venus prior to Jeremiah Horrocks, including by Assyrian, Chinese, and Aztec sky watchers.

http://adsbit.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/nph-iarticle_query?bibcode=1882MNRAS..43...41J

On the Probable Assyrian Transit of Venus by Rev. S.J. Johnson (1882) suggests an Assyrian tablet may refer to an ancient recorded transit, as mentioned in a previous journal.

http://www.nojum.net/articles/venustransit/history/

Pouria Nazemi asserts in *Nojum, The Astronomy Magazine of Iran* that the Persian Islamic scientist Avicenna witnessed the 1032 transit of Venus. Avicenna claims in his book *Shifa*, "I say that I have seen Venus as a spot on the Sun's face."

http://transits.mhs.ox.ac.uk/

A browseable database of historical instruments and images from collections around the world; from the Scientific Instrument Commission (SIC) of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science. Institutions and individuals are invited to develop the site by contributing their own material.

Quotes from the Transit of Venus

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- "Willingly would I burn to death like Phaeton, were this the price for reaching the Sun and learning its shape, its size, and its distance."
- -Eudoxus
- "...the clouds, as if by divine interposition, were entirely dispersed, and I was once more invited to the grateful task of repeating my observations. I then beheld a most agreeable spectacle, the object of my sanguine wishes...I could scarcely have wished for a more extended period."
- -Jeremiah Horrocks
- "This sight...is by far the noblest astronomy affords..."
- -Edmond Halley
- "Liquor gives us the necessary strength for determining the distance of the Earth from the Sun."
- -Alexandre-Gui Pingré

Read more: Quotes from the Transit of Venus

Hoole and Other Destinations in England

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St Michael's Church, Much Hoole, Lancashire
Carr House, Bretherton, Lancashire
Manchester Town Hall, Lancashire
Lower Broughton, Manchester
Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool
St Michael's Church, Toxteth, Liverpool
Westminster Abbey, London

St Michael's Church, Much Hoole, Lancashire



















Images: Chuck Bueter

On the A59 road, the 'Hoole' church whose duties are thought to have interrupted Horrocks' observing. There is a large sun-dial on the side in memory of Horrocks and a memorial stained glass window depicting Horrocks observing. With the church locked, if you want to see inside you will have to contact the vicar/rector in advance.

http://www.hoolecechurch.org.uk/main.htm

The Hoole C.E. Church website features Jeremiah Horrocks, St. Michael Church, and the events commemorating and celebrating the transit, with Sir Patrick Moore serving as the Honorary Patron.

Read more: Hoole and Other Destinations in England

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