

PHM Planetarium & Air/Space Museum

History of Our Facility



During the fall of 1977 preliminary plans were drawn for Bittersweet Elementary School which would be centrally located in the PHM School district. The concept for a school district Planetarium was presented by Art Klinger to PHM Superintendent Dr. A. Dean Speicher, and the PHM School Board at a public school board meeting on May 8, 1978. On June 10, 1978, it was approved and officially named the PHM Planetarium located at Bittersweet Elementary School. The planetarium name implies that it will serve the entire Penn-Harris-Madison Community.

It was proposed that the Planetarium would do the following:

- provide free public shows at least once a month
- provide a sequential K-8 Astronomy/Science/History/Geography/Math Curriculum
- provide, at a nominal fee, the same opportunities for education to any school district outside PHM

The Planetarium had its first set of shows titled “Star Over Bethlehem” on Sunday, December 13, 1980, at: 1:00, 2:30, 6:00 and 7:30. On February 28, 1981, the Planetarium was officially dedicated by Apollo 15 Lunar Module Pilot, Jim Irwin, who was the eighth man to walk on the Moon.

The [planetarium specs](#) reflect the capability of the facility.



In 1983, the facility unofficially became the PHM Planetarium/Space Museum. An extensive mailing campaign was done to secure the personalized autographs of all the Astronauts and prominent Cosmonauts who had flown into space. On our walls are the autographs of all the famous men and women who made space history.



In the spring of 1985, Art Klinger who was a “Teacher in Space” Candidate was invited to Kennedy Space Center along with several hundred other applicants for interviews. There he met a

representative from the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, Washington D.C. Through this connection he was able to obtain 44 space artifacts, 13 of which have been on the Moon. All of these items, which are currently on display around the Planetarium are on permanent loan. We are the only public school Planetarium in the world to have this kind of an extensive display.



In the spring of 2000 the Planetarium began an extensive search for autographed memorabilia related to Aviation beginning with the Wright Brothers in 1903. The purpose was to show the tremendous leap in technology from the beginning to the end of the 20th century. Our autographs include: Orville Wright, Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, Wiley Post, Eddie Rickenbacker, Chuck Yeager, X-15 pilots, Flying Tigers Pilots, Enola Gay Crewmembers and Boch Car Crewmembers to name a few. Unofficially we are now the PHM Planetarium & Air/Space Museum.



Starting in the spring of 2002 we began a Civil War Artifacts Display Case which contains over 30 items used during the Civil War such as: Springfield Rifle and bayonet, .58 caliber cartridge, bullets, Union canteen, eating utensils, drinking cup, cartridge box, percussion caps and pouch cannon ball, Union Calvary Belt found at Gettysburg in the Peach Field, Confederate Pistol, to name a few. Also we have five framed slave documents. All items in our display are authentic. This display is for two Planetarium Shows titled: "Civil War/Slavery" and "Civil War Life and Battles." Both shows are annually presented during the month of May. The Civil War display Case is set up for the months of April and May only.

All three museum displays are works in progress. So when you visit us the next time new things will have been added.



More than 500,000 visitors have reaped the benefits of the PHM planetarium and its abundant educational resources. Nonetheless, in the [2005 and 2006 Budget Adjustments and Reductions](#) proposal, [PHM Superintendent](#) Robert Howard recommended "eliminating the planetarium position" effective with the 2006/2007 school year. Subsequent input from the public has encouraged the PHM Board of Education to put that recommendation on hold, as of May 2004. Modest entrance fees have since been added for some public programs.

Special Guests

Since the Planetarium opened some of our special guests have included:

Jim Irwin

Apollo 15 Astronaut, Moonwalker

Scott Carpenter

Aurora 7 Original Mercury Astronaut

Harrison Schmidt	Apollo 17 Astronaut Moonwalker
Gyorgi Grechko	Soviet Cosmonaut retired
Jerry Ross	Shuttle Astronaut who has flown seven times into space
Bob Parker	Shuttle Astronaut
Norman Grissom	Brother of Gus Grissom who was an Original Mercury Astronaut
Fred Haise	Apollo 13 Astronaut

Why a Planetarium?

The Planetarium is a unique facility because it is a hands-on practical application laboratory/theater that addresses many subjects like: Astronomy, all Sciences in general, Geography, History and Math. It allows the audience to "experience" the subject. We feel this will enhance performance in deductive and inductive tasks, namely thinking and reasoning. It moves us away from just "show and tell."

Why a Space Museum?

The Space Museum is an extension of the learning process. It allows our audience to get a sense and an appreciation of the events that have shaped our lives during the last half of the 20th Century and into the 21st Century.

Why an Air Museum?

The Air Museum along with the Space Museum shows the leap in technology that was made from the beginning to the end of the 20th Century. Future Historians will marvel at the technological progress that was, and is still being made. We want our audience to realize and understand not only the progress; but, the price in human lives lost to advance this cause. We also want them to understand because of this our lives are much better.

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