

The Young Glimpse Moon in Eclipse as Elders Fail

By McCANDLISH PHILLIPS

In Sheep Meadow in Central Park, where hundreds might have gathered for the moon show yesterday morning, four skywatchers stood fruitless vigil at 4:45 A.M., scanning the sky for a hint of a lunar total eclipse.

A thick quilt of clouds blocked their view. It seemed a perversely timed obstruction. Occasional fleeting glimpses of the moon had

been seen right up to 4:27 A.M., two minutes after the critical phase of the eclipse began.

Thereafter there was not the tiniest aperture through which the moon could wink at the small platform that had been set up for astronomers of The American Museum-Hayden Planetarium. None of them showed up anyway.

But on the observation deck

of the Empire State Building, a dozen teen-agers, amateur high school astronomers, saw and recorded bits of the eclipse in conditions that had some of the adventure and most of the discomfort of a fogbound ship at sea.

Theirs were the only sightings reported in the Northeast yesterday. The Hayden Planetarium, which had hoped to take photographs from the top of the United Nations

Secretariat tower, got none. The Naval Observatory in Washington drew a moon blank, too.

Despite official warnings issued in the evening by the planetarium, the Weather Bureau and the Parks Department—all canceling, or advising against, plans for sky observation—the young people trooped into the Empire State lobby at 11:30 P.M., carrying cameras, two six-

inch telescopes, binoculars, tripods, monoculars (hand telescopes), a radio for short-wave time signals and a guitar.

The 10 boys and two girls, 13 to 17 years old, were mostly members of the Amateur Observers Society chapter that meets at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute.

It was raw and wet on the deck, and the mists ran fast in a stiff wind. At times the observers stoop wrapped in clouds, with a visibility of five feet.

"We were socked in solid," Daniel Howe Jr. of the building management said. "But the moon kept teasing us. The wind would dissipate the fog a bit."

The moon and broken clouds and the wind had put on a fine October show earlier in the evening. Fleecy clouds, full of misty fringes, slid across the moon, a polished dime-size disc.

For a moment, the moon's face would be veiled in filmy haze. Then thin wisps of clouds would cross it; then a break would come, and the full moon, sharp-edged, poured silver upon the cityscape.

There was mystery and



The New York Times (by Meyer Liebowitz)

Teen-agers who sighted eclipse from the observation deck of the Empire State Building remained on watch till sunrise

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United Press International Telephoto

The eclipse of the moon as photographed in Memphis.

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beauty and motion as long streaks of high clouds rode the October sky, but about 11 P.M. low cloudiness settled over the city and made a nearly solid overcast. Fog drifted in off the water.

"Very low clouds, 300 to 500 feet," the Weather Bureau called them. But the Empire State Building thrusts to 1,250 feet.

"The fog kept rising and lifting and dipping," said 15-year-old Jay Rosenberg.

At one point they stood alone up there, looking down on a carpet of fog, with only the Chrysler needle piercing through to keep them company.

Overhead there was patchy cloudiness, and they stood clear in between the lower and upper layers of white.

What Was to Be

Thus they saw snatches of the celestial display. According to Dr. Thomas D. Nicholson, the planetarium chairman, the eclipse was to occur when the moon passed into the shadow of the earth. This shadow, cast by the sun, extends in a great cone 860,000 miles into space from what might be called the back side of the earth.

The full moon was to enter the outer shadow of the earth — the penumbra — at 3:10 A.M. The first observable change would have been a dark shadow "biting" into the upper left edge of the moon at 4:25 A.M.

The shadow was then to steal across the lunar face, completely covering the moon by 5:45 A.M. During this hour-long total eclipse, the moon, still visible, would have been a coppery red.

The last total moon eclipse was on Dec. 18, 1964; the next will be on April 12, 1968, at 11:10 P.M.

Donald Abileah, 17, said the group glimpsed part of the penumbral phase a couple of times. "Then we got a brief view of a crescent moon, with only about one-fourth of the face lit up, about 5:15."

In the Sheep Meadow, Carol Minkoff, a young woman, sat on the unused astronomers' platform and read aloud: "There is an inn, a merry old inn/ Beneath an old grey hill/ And there they brew a beer so brown/ That the Man in the Moon himself came down/ One night to drink his fill."

It was J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Man in the Moon Stayed Up Too Late."

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