

**The Autumnal Equinox Starlight Walking Tour of Mount Oread
with Professor Emeritus Ted Johnson**

Beginning at 5 a.m. on Tuesday, September 22, 2009

Over thousands of years, perceptive humans have discovered and then reified in structures the interrelations of the slowly changing annual star configurations in the night sky and the radically different position of the sun on the horizon at the winter and summer solstices and the similar position of the sun at the fall and spring equinox. The rising sun at the winter solstice illuminates the back of a long corridor in the rock tumulus constructed some 5,200 years ago at Newgrange, Ireland. For over 4,500 years the Sphinx in Egypt has been staring at the rising sun at equinox while behind the Sphinx and during the course of the year, the setting sun arcs over three pyramids and sets well to the south at winter solstice and well to the north at summer solstice. Oriented temples on acropolises constructed two dozen centuries ago in Greece celebrate triumphantly the human struggle with chaos to achieve logos.

In France and from the 9th century on, choirs of churches traditionally face the rising sun at equinox. Millions of readers of the *Da Vinci Code* have learned that in the transept of the church Saint-Sulpice in Paris, sunlight passes through a small hole in an upper window and at noon moves over a copper band in the floor of the transept and marks out the summer solstice and the equinoxes, and at the winter solstice, it moves up an obelisk.

Closer to Mount Oread, one can observe the solstices and equinoxes as the sun shines through and on the analemma in the Galileo Court of Johnson County Community College. Rangers conduct solstice and equinox tours at the reconstructed woodhenge at Cahokia Mounds to the west of the immense oriented, earthen pyramidal mound constructed between the years 800 and 1400 on a site in Illinois near the Mississippi River, just east of St. Louis. Cahokia Mounds, a World Heritage site with its pyramid and plaza, recalls oriented structures in Mexico. In Perú, in the latter third of the 15th century, Incas pulled extraordinary oriented structures directly out of the stone of Pachamama or Mother Earth to mark the equinoxes and the solstices at Ollantaytambo in the Sacred Valley and vertiginous Machu Picchu high in the Andes, a site now considered one of the Seven Wonders of the modern world.

High above the golden valley and glorious to view, rise up structures on the eastern brow of Mount Oread in harmony with these intellectual sisters. The eastern façade of our Natural History Museum is based on the western façade of the cathedral Saint-Trophime in Arles, France, and it recalls the implications of the 12th century cycle of the Seven Liberal Arts on the western façade of the cathedral Notre-Dame of Chartres, also in France.

On equinox morning on Mount Oread at the intersection of 14th Street and Jayhawk Boulevard, the sun rises just after 7 a.m. and illuminates two manhole covers on the top of 14th Street, so that for a fleeting minute one beholds a line of three burnished and blazing golden disks, two fixed in an asphalt road and one quickly rising just above the horizon.

If you would like to experience the beautiful interrelations of the stars, our nearest star the sun, and certain remarkable buildings on our campus at equinox, come join us at 5 a.m. on Tuesday, September 22, at the intersection of 14th Street and Jayhawk Boulevard to consider Spooner Hall, the former University Library, oriented and constructed in the manner of a 12th century Romanesque church. We then discover how Fraser Hall, the tower of the Natural History Museum, the Daniel Chester French sculpture of mentor and student before the Ionic portico of Lippincott, and the main north door of Watson Library, an oriented collegiate Gothic structure, align with Polaris, our current pole star in the 26,000 year cycle of the procession of the equinoxes. Somewhat after 6 a.m., having discussed the orientation of Stauffer-Flint with its bisected circle in stone above the eastern door we will return to the eastern façade of the Natural History Museum to see how the iconography and ideas beautifully interrelate. Around 7 a.m. we will experience the brightening of the sky and the rising of the sun directly above 14th Street.

In case of heavy clouds, we will gather on Wednesday, September 23 at 5: 00 a.m. For further information on this event, contact the Department of Humanities and Western Civilization at hwc@ku.edu or Professor Ted Johnson at jtj@ku.edu.

As everyone knows: DO NOT LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE SUN! LOOKING DIRECTLY AT THE SUN WILL CAUSE PERMANENT DAMAGE TO YOUR EYESIGHT!

