

Indiana in Eclipse

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As a native of Indiana, I note that the 2024 total eclipse of the Sun will be the first to pass over the state in more than 150 years. Here, I share four (very different) vignettes from the last Hoosier Eclipse Experience: Saturday, 7 August 1869. (Each of the municipalities mentioned are on the path of both solar eclipses.)



Joseph Gardner (1833-1919) of **Bedford** undertook organized observation of the 1869 total solar eclipse. With little preparation, though, the effort sounds more like what today might be a Saturday afternoon recreational golf foursome. Four gentlemen gathered to photograph the eclipse using a make-shift camera and telescope assembled "out of odds and ends." None of them were remotely astronomers. Yet, through good luck as much as anything else, the one acceptable image that they managed to make between second and third contact happened to catch a spectacular solar prominence, so big that it was visible to the naked eye.

Contrast the amateurs with the professional scientists at the University in **Bloomington**. Daniel Kirkwood (1814-1895) was an astronomer famous for his work on the dynamics of asteroid orbits (the Kirkwood Gaps). Yet he took a passive role as the Moon's umbra passed over his hometown. He gathered with a few colleagues on a rooftop to watch the spectacle but made no measurements and wrote nothing about it. Two other professors intended to photograph the event, "but when the totality came on, we both broke and ran to see it, and let the important moment pass."



In **Columbus**, a local coterie of the town's professionals gathered to observe the Gilded Age's total eclipse: Reverend N. S. Dickey (Presbyterian), Physician George G. Rabb, and Professor A. H. Graham (Soldiers and Sailors Orphan Home). These were people who made their own hours and could interrupt what was then considered a workday. Yet there is something melancholy about Reverend John Logan, standing by himself in **Edinburgh**, looking upward with no one whom to share the eclipse experience.



Though the 1869 total eclipse of the Sun was visible Kentucky. The 82-year-old still remembered vividly from a Depression Era, New Deal jobs program. At was a recently emancipated slave.



in **Albany**, Nancy Whalleh (of 924 Pearl Street) saw it while living in "the Day of the Dark" when interviewed by cultural preservationists the time of the post-bellum solar eclipse, the nine-year-old Nancy