As far as my search for the house goes, there was nothing to it. I just looked up 62 Church Street, Norwich, CT in “Mapquest” and drove right to it. I recognized it right away from the pictures that were shown at the Annual Meeting. The house is now broken up into four apartments, with parking spaces behind it (up the hill). A young (twenty-something) guy came out of the door after visiting a friend who lives there. I felt obliged to explain why I was photographing the house and mentioned the name “William Tyler Olcott.” He shrugged, looked at me strangely, and went on his way. The only other observation I would make about the site is that “back in the day” the house must have had a commanding view of Norwich Harbor, which is located at the confluence of the Yantic and Shetucket Rivers. They merge to form the Thames River, which flows about twelve miles, passing New London on its way to Long Island Sound. The view from the house is now mostly obstructed by newer buildings.

—Dave Hurdis
The Olcott Observatory—A Last Look

In March of 1958, the trustees of the Otis Library of Norwich, Connecticut asked me to assist them in planning a possible renovation of the top floor of the Olcott House to install a small planetarium and also to reactivate the observatory. The Olcott House, at this time, was a children's library owned by the Otis Library.

I corresponded with two planetarium manufacturers (Spitz and Zeiss) and Spitz had a unit suitable for a small space. Various telescope manufacturers were contacted for a 3” refractor similar to the one Olcott described in his books.

The Otis Library trustees decided against the planetarium and observatory plan and directed their funds to the purchase of a van to carry books to the elderly and handicapped who could not make it to the library.

I recollect my last look at the Olcott observatory as follows:

Upon entering the doorway into the observatory, one sees an octagonal configuration which measures 10 feet across the flats of the octagon. The dome was made of [painted canvas] and had several rollers on which the dome rotated. A single wooden handle was fastened to the dome structure and the dome was rotated by pushing the handle. On each wall panel of the octagon were numerous watercolor paintings of various astronomical objects. The telescope pier was a very massive 8” diameter steel pipe and had a rising pier feature. The pier could be cranked from a height of 56” to 94” to permit placement of the telescope eyepiece to a convenient height.

Robert Tumicki
Norwich, Conn.
Feb. 28, 1982
(from the AAVSO Archives, W. S. Houston Collection)