

Dedication of

THE HOUSTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OBSERVATORY

Columbus, Texas

October 15, 1983

A Brief History of

THE HOUSTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

The Houston astronomical Society came into being on September 15, 1955. At the time it was known as the Houston Amateur Astronomy Club, and that name was not changed until 1968. The original "club" met in the old museum at the zoo on the first friday evening of each month at 8 o'clock. This day and time of meeting have been a thread of continuity down to the present. The regular meeting location was moved from the museum to the University of Houston, where meetings have been held since 1958.

Observing the night skies has been an important society activity since the beginning. Before the growth of Houston made it impossible, the Society met regularly at the Lamar Observatory in northwest Houston. In 1974 these monthly field trips were moved to the W. W. Butler ranch near New Ulm, Tx, some 80 miles west of Houston. Continued active member participation in these monthly sessions at that distance encouraged society leaders to consider a permanent facility.

In 1978 it was apparent that the high quality 32cm f/5 newtonian telescope that had been in design and construction since 1973 would soon be completed. Steps were taken to incorporate the society as a non-profit organization. Recognition of that status by the IRS in 1980 allowed the members to begin serious fund raising to establish an observatory to serve member needs. In 1980 the Fondren Foundation donated our present 18 acre site near Columbus, Tx. Development of the site was undertaken immediately. Phase I of the site development plan is now nearly complete. Phase I includes 22 observing pads for members with portable telescopes, and a concrete block, roll-off roof observatory building to house three telescopes.

Donations have made it possible to install two additional moderate size telescopes in the building with the the telescope constructed by society members. The University of Houston donated a second 32cm f/7 newtonian reflector to the society. This instrument was donated by NASA to the university when it's use in the space program was completed. In 1982, The Faith Foundation of Houston donated additional funds to purchase a 36cm f/11 schmidt-cassegrain reflector. This is the third telescope now permanently mounted in the observatory building. A fine mounting for the 36cm telescope was constructed and donated by a member.

Members of the society have been active contributors to numerous serious programs in support of the advancement of astronomy. In the early years the main effort was meteor counts. In the past decade this has expanded to include observations of the sun, variable stars,comets and many expeditions in Texas and surrounding states to time occultations of stars by the moon and minor planets. This effort is expected to continue and expand with the new observatory. There is a growing interest among some members in astrophotography and photoelectric photometry. As one of the most southerly amateur observatories in the United States we expect to have many nights of excellent opportunity for recreational observing in addition to such continued contributions to the advancement of astronomy.

HAS Observatory Dedication Program

Opening Remarks	*Tom Williams*
Welcome and Recognition of Honored Guests	*Art Ciampi, HAS President*
History of the Observatory Project	*Allan Parker, Observatory Chairman*
Recognition by Others	*Tom Williams*
Recognition of Contributors	*Tom Williams*
Dedication Address	*Dr. Harlan J. Smith, Director, McDonald Observatory*
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony	*Allan Parker* *John Hiatt* *Art Ciampi*