

CENTENARY OF THE CAPE ASTRONOMICAL ASSOCIATION

The first Astronomical Society in
South Africa



**SPECTACULAR
CELESTIAL EVENT**

Halley's Comet 1910



Halley's Comet 1910





HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Events of the time

Robert Peary Reached
the North Pole in
1909

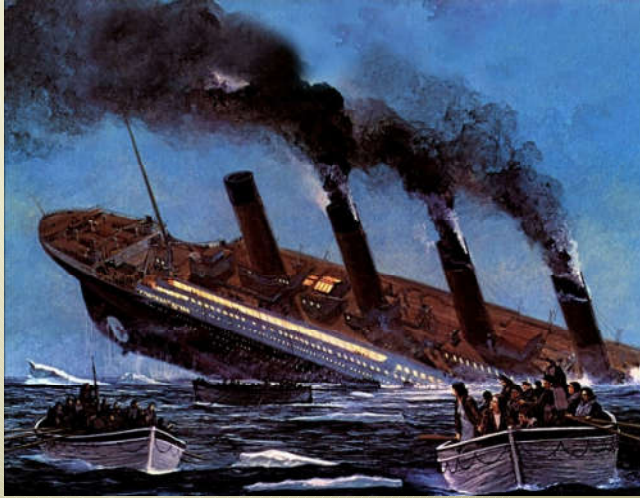


Events of the time



Machu Picchu was discovered by Hiram Bingham in July 1911

Events of the time



Titanic in April 1912

South Africa

1910: Union of South Africa

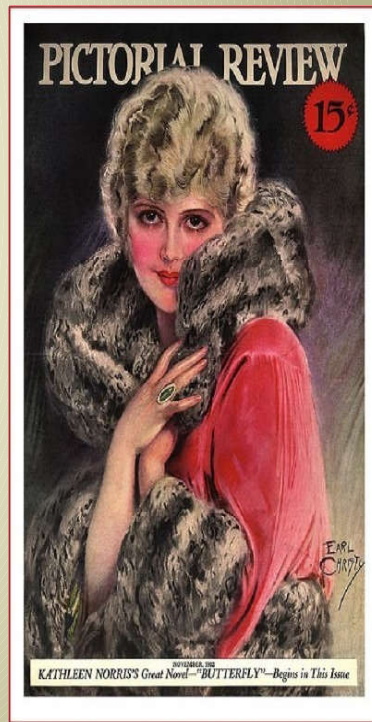
1912: African National Congress

1914: National Party



Emancipation of Women

In 1912, in Cape Town, female property owners were given the right to vote in Municipal matters.





**CAPE ASTRONOMICAL
ASSOCIATION**



Source: Cape Times, Thursday, October 3 1912.

Cape Times

“A meeting of those interested in amateur astronomy, with a view to the formation of a local Astronomical Association will be held in the rooms of the Cape Town Photographic Society, Old Town House, this evening.”

Source: Cape Times, Thursday, October 3 1912.

Placed by D. Gordon Mills

Old Town House



Source: Hans Fransen; A Cape Camera, The Architectural Beauty of the Old Cape. Photographs from the Arthur Elliott Collection in the Cape Archives.

1st Meeting held on 3 October 1912

List of attendees:

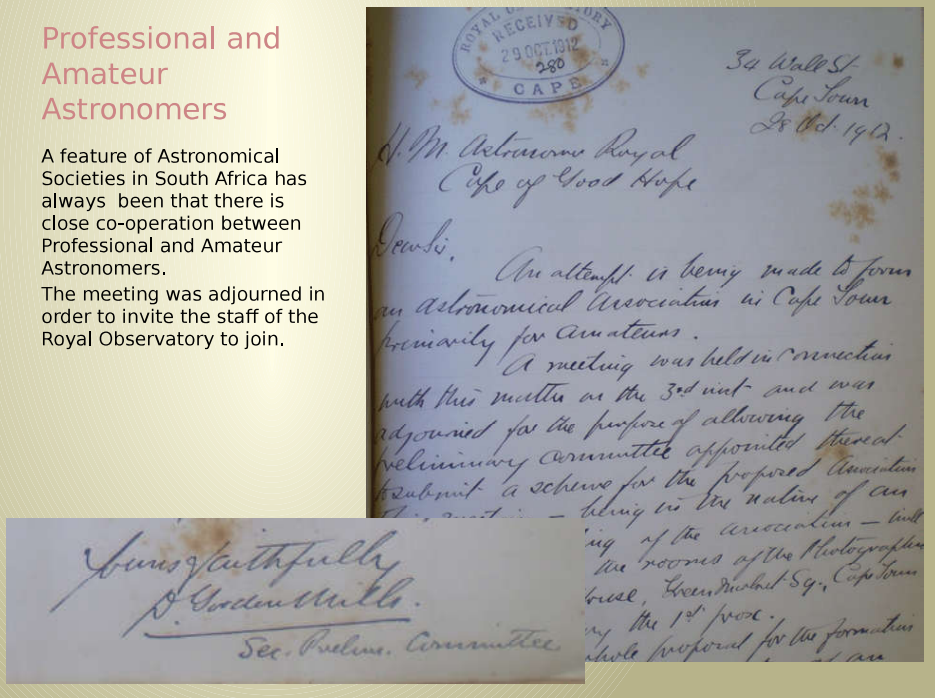
- Ladies
 - A Glossop
 - Ellen Smith
 - Messrs J W Copenhagen
- Men
 - S A Davies
 - R T King
 - A W Long
 - Andrew Milne
 - D Gordon Mills
 - William Reed
 - H W Schonegevel
 - J F Skjellerup
 - E J Steer
 - John Williams

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Professional and Amateur Astronomers

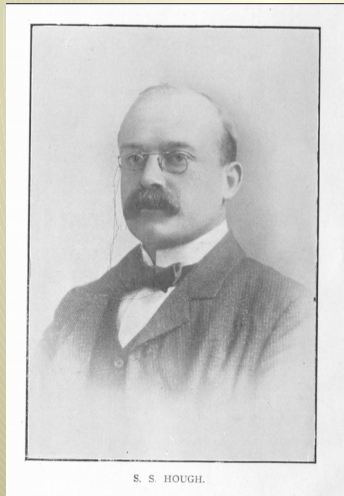
A feature of Astronomical Societies in South Africa has always been that there is close co-operation between Professional and Amateur Astronomers.

The meeting was adjourned in order to invite the staff of the Royal Observatory to join.



Source: S.A.A.O. Archive; Royal Observatory Cape of Good Hope; S – Societies; 1907 – 1928, 001aa

Honorary
President:
S. S. Hough



1912 October 30.

Dear Sir,

I have just received your letter of the 26th inst. relative to the formation of an Astronomical Association in Cape Town, and will endeavour to be present at the meeting on Friday evening next.

The proposed Association would in my opinion fulfil a useful purpose and I shall be pleased to give it my support as far as is practicable.

As regards the question of becoming Honorary President of the Association I am sensible of the honour conveyed and will give the proposal my consideration on receipt of more information regarding the constitution and aims of the Society.

Yours sincerely,
S. S. Hough
H. N. Astronomer.

D. Gordon Mills, Esq.,
34 Wall St.,
Cape Town.

Source Letter: S.A.A.O. Archive; Royal
Observatory Cape of Good Hope; S –
Societies; 1907 – 1928, 002 / Source Photo:
S S Hough (Source: JASSA1923, Vol.1 No2,
P.1.) (Auke 1923-J-1-2-1)

Foundation Meeting 8 November 1912

The roll of foundation members and the positions elected:

- Hon. President: Mr. S.S. Hough - His Majesty's Astronomer.
- President: Dr. J.K.E. Halm.
- Vice-Presidents: Dr. S.J. Lunt and Senator A.W. Roberts.
- Secretary and treasurer: Mr. J.F. Skjellerup.
- Committee: Mr. S.A. Davies, A.W. Long, D. Gordon Mills and W. Reid.
- **Miss** A. Glossop, H. Long and E. Smith; **Mr.** W.H. Cox, R.T. King, A. Milne, A. Pilling, E.J. Steer, S. Sangster, H.W. Schonegevel and J. Williams.

- Source: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CAPE CENTRE, Researched by Audrey Joubert; Houghton; JASSA_v2n4_153; Constitution of A.S.S.A. (1921?), p.1. Source: S.A.A.O. Archive; Royal Observatory Cape of Good Hope; S – Societies; 1907 – 1928.)

Inauguration Meeting 13 December 1912

- The meeting was presided over by the Hon. President, S.S. Hough.
- Inaugural lecture delivered by Dr. J.K.E. Halm on Spectroscopy, which was illustrated by lantern slides.
- There were forty two people present.

The Cape Astronomical Association

Rules

I Name The title and name of this Association shall be "The Cape Astronomical Association".

II Object. The objects of this Association are to encourage the study of the sciences of Astronomy and to disseminate current astronomical information among its members.

The following shall be recognized as some of the means by which the Association may carry out its objects:-

(a) the holding of monthly or other periodic meetings of its members, and the reading of papers at such meetings.

(b) The promotion and organization of lectures and the formation of observing sections.

(c) Affording members not possessing astronomical telescopes the opportunity of practical observation.

III Officers

One of the founder members, Mr. A.W. Long, contributed a monthly column to the Cape Times Newspaper on astronomy.

CAPE TIMES, TUESDAY

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BY GAR
 A Simple Scheme providin
 It's Your own

Read this →

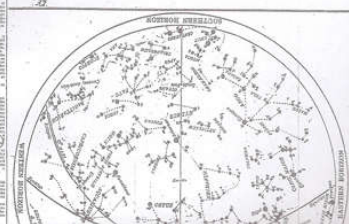
Start your Score Today.

Read this →

Points to Remember:
 Every Penny Counts.
 5/- scores one point.
 20 points makes a present sure.
 Largest number of points wins
 a £10 present.

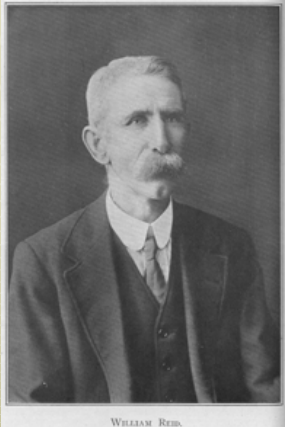
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Observing Sections

COMET SECTION (METEOR)



VARIABLE STAR SECTION



Figure 1. Frank Skjellerup (1875–1952) as a young man (Orchiston Collection).

The accounts by Long and Smits refer to “Meteor Section”. In the annual reports contained in the circulars the section is called the “Comet Section” and the information are or comets that was observed, no meteors.

INTERRUPTION

The Great War: 1914 - 1918

•The War temporarily brought the activities of the CAA to a halt.

Source: Photos of the Great War
<http://www.gwpda.org/photos/coppermine/displayimage.php?pos=-28>





NO Cross is sacred to the Hun.



CONTINUATION

Reconvening the Association

Sometime in 1916 a meeting was called in order to get the society back on its feet. There is very little background about this. We do know:

- The first meeting was at the YMCA Hall in Long St, later to become offices of Eastern Telegraph Company
- We know that Mr. Alfred Bull was involved.

At a Special Meeting in August 1916 it was decided to hold the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June of each year. We know that this meeting held at the "Cape Town Gallery Club Room", Burmester's Building in Adderley Street.

Sources: YMCA (JASSA_v2n4_157) / Bull (JASSA_v2n5_237-238) / AGM (JASSA_v2n4_158)

The First Publications

Publications were known as "CIRCULARS"

A total of eight circulars were published

- Four of the circulars contained interesting talk that were presented to the Association.

- Four of the circulars were reports of the AGM's.

CIRCULAR No. 2.

CAPE ASTRONOMICAL ASSOCIATION.

Report of Annual Meeting, June 12, 1918.

The Annual Meeting of the Association was held in the rooms of the Owl Club on Wednesday, June 12th, 1918, at 8 p.m., the President, Dr. J. Lunt, F.I.C., being in the chair.

THE NEW STAR.

The President, in making reference to the new star in the constellation Aquila, said: "Before proceeding to our ordinary business, I should like to refer to the important discovery of the nova in Aquila made by one of our members, Mr. Watson, of Beaufort West. It is fitting, I think, that we send Mr. Watson a telegram from this Association in Annual Meeting assembled, conveying to him our heartiest congratulations on his discovery. Mr. Watson's name will go down to posterity as the first, in South Africa at any rate, to detect this nova which suddenly developed into one of the brightest stars in the sky, and one of the most brilliant novae of recent times.

"His name will be linked with that of Dr. Anderson, of Edinburgh, another amateur who discovered the new stars in Auriga and Perseus.

"Mr. Watson realised the importance of his discovery, he was not content to write a letter to his local paper, hoping it would catch the eye of some astronomer, but he telegraphed the information both to the Royal Observatory and the Union Observatory, and enabled them to make spectroscopic observations of the condition of the star at a stage which might have been lost but for his prompt notification.

"The star has attracted attention in other lands than ours, but let us hope that Mr. Watson's discovery may be the first. It is an illustration of the important aid the amateur can render to the professional astronomer and to science in general, and if the continued existence of the Cape Astronomical Association required any justification, a discovery such as this by one of its members supplies it."

Spanish Flu: Influenza

- 6 000 people died in Cape Town in two weeks - September 1918.
- During this time the Comet section made no observations because Reid was quite ill.
- Hon. President Hough's wife died as a result of the epidemic.

The Management of the

CREAMERY
TEA ROOMS,
ADDERLEY STREET

Desire to inform the General Public that this Establishment is now an

ENTIRELY
BRITISH CONCERN

Patrons can rely on the Catering being of a high order, only the Best Materials being Supplied.

INFLUENZA.
Be on your Guard.

All Doctors, Nurses, and those who come in contact with Influenza Patients, should apply to the inside of the nostrils, night and morning,

Belgium in their camp, listed the A. Tell them th sufferings w patience and admiration. when the ho and come it in Great Br. memory that restoring to dependence. history of the more indisput reached the p distress, and days later, heard with fo most imper Asquith's wo over the head son. They they will be a in the past. confidence, no administration for in the defen Despite all the are ready to for months and to entice the enemy." For message Reus marks. The c dawned, and joice with t that their heroism and u the darkest no tion of humili once there in e the oppressor.

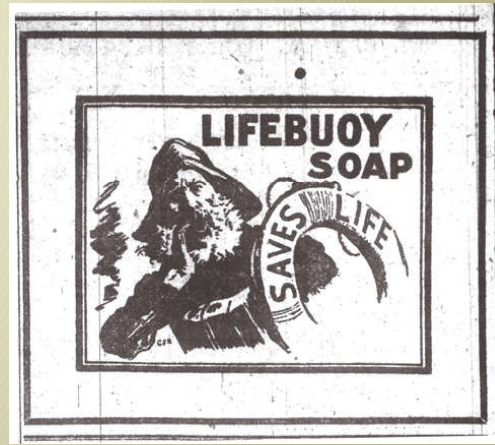
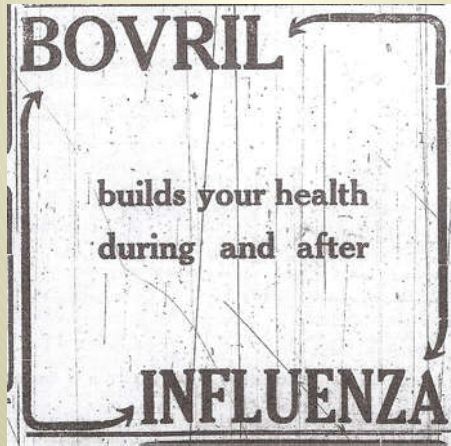
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Source: 6000 weeks (Uys, p.68) / Reid (CAA_C4_5-6) / Hough (JASSA_v1n2_28)

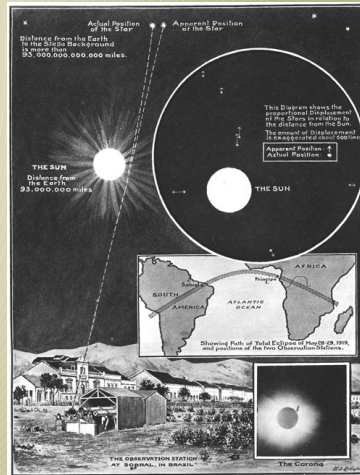
Influenza



Peace



Events of the time



In 1919 Arthur Eddington verified Albert Einstein theory by observing the position of stars during a solar eclipse. The Circulars never mention anything of this great event.

Discoveries by the members of the CAA

- 8 June 1918: Nova star discovered by Mr. Watson of Beaufort West. Co-discoverer Dr Anderson of Edinburgh.
- 11 June 1918: Comet discovered by Reid.
- 18 Dec 1919: Comet discovered by Skjellerup
- 11 Dec 1920: Comet discovered by Skjellerup
- 13 March 1921: Comet discovered by Reid.

Sources: Nova (CAA_C2-1)/ Comet Reid 1918 (CAA_C4_6)/ Comet Skjellerup 1919 (CAA_C6-5)/ Comet Skjellerup 1920 (CAA_C8-6)/ Comet Reid 1921 (CAA_C8_6)

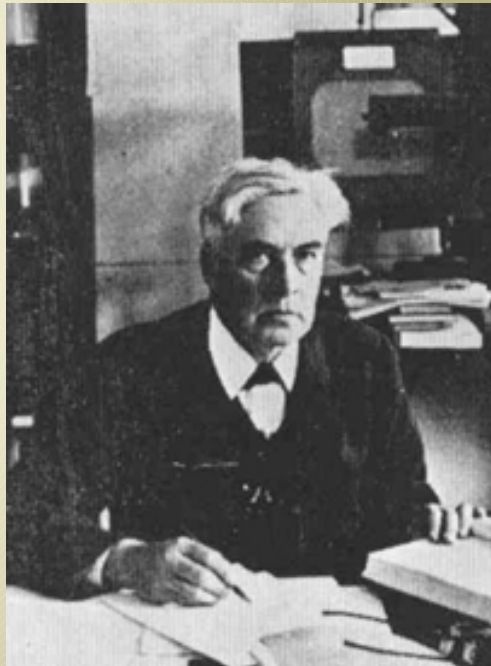
Johannesburg Astronomical Association

A second astronomical association was formed

- In 1917 Theodore MacKenzie, moved to Johannesburg.
- With the goodwill of the CAA he started a similar Association.

Johannesburg Astronomical Association

The founding meeting of the Johannesburg Astronomical Association (JAA) was held on 28 February 1918 with R.T.A. Innes, Union Astronomer as President.



Amalgamation

- A letter was drafted by the CAA and read at a meeting of the JAA on 22 July 1921 suggesting that the two Associations merge into a new Society.
- 12 July 1922: Special Meeting - vote on proposal to amalgamate with Johannesburg Astronomical Association and form ASSA (according to Schonegevel)
- 1 July 1922 is given as the date that ASSA was established (according to Long)

Letter CAA to JAA (LongJASSA_v2n4_164-16)

Astronomical Society of South Africa

- President: Mr. S.S. Hough - His Majesty's Astronomer.
- Vice-Presidents: Dr. J.K.E. Halm; Senator A.W. Roberts and Mr. W.B. Jackson
- Secretary: Mr. T. MacKenzie
- Treasurer: Mr. J.F. Skjellerup
- Members of Council: Mr. W. Watson; A.W. Long; W. Reid; H.W. Schonegevel, H.E. Wood and W. M. Worsell

More information

ASSA Historical Website

<http://assa.saao.ac.za/html/his-arch-frontpage.html>