

The Big Eye



The Newsletter of the Friends of Palomar Observatory Vol. 4, No. 1

The Journey to Palomar on PBS

*Before We Went to the Moon, George Ellery Hale
Took Us to the Stars*

The Journey to Palomar is the story of American astronomer George Ellery Hale's dramatic public and private struggles to build the world's four largest telescopes, which set the stage for astronomy and space exploration throughout the 20th century, revealing the greatest discoveries since Galileo and Copernicus. The documentary, airing Monday, November 10, 2008, 10:00-11:30 p.m. ET (check local listings) on PBS, traces Hale's lifelong efforts to build these great instruments, culminating with "the most famous telescope in the world" — the million-pound telescope on Palomar Mountain.

The Journey to Palomar, the result of more than five years' work by Los Angeles filmmakers Todd and Robin Mason, traces the story of the Chicago-born Hale (1868-1938), considered the father of astrophysics, as he strives personally and professionally to build the great telescopes at the Yerkes and Mount Wilson Observatories, and finally the 20-year effort to build the million-pound telescope on Palomar Mountain — considered the "moon shot" of the 1930s and 40s. Hale's observatories enabled Edwin Hubble's 1929 discovery of the expansion of the universe.

The film uses rare archival materials and interviews with America's top historians, scientists and authors to tell Hale's story. His observatories both revolutionized our understanding of the universe and led the growing pre-eminence of American science and technology. A dedicated scientist and inventor who was also blessed with an entrepreneurial gift, Hale believed America offered the best platform upon which to investigate and develop scientific truth. He successfully engaged the nation's leaders in business, science and politics to support his vision.

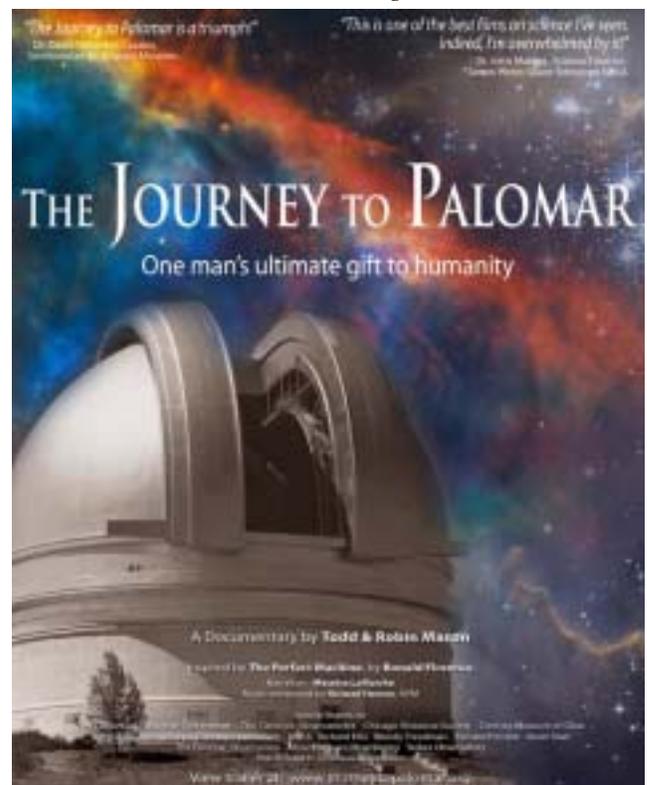
Hale's energetic promotion of American science, how-

Continued on Page 3

See The Journey to Palomar at Palomar

On November 2nd you can join filmmakers Robin and Todd Mason, along with Caltech astronomer Richard Ellis as they present an advance screening of *The Journey to Palomar* from on the observing floor of the 200-inch Hale Telescope. This once-in-a-lifetime event will celebrate George Ellery Hale and the crowning achievement of his career, the glass giant of Palomar. This charity fundraising-event will directly support the birth of the observatory's new outreach center and programs that will allow future visitors to Palomar the opportunity to gaze through telescopes that will be permanently dedicated toward public outreach.

Continued on Page 2



The Journey to Palomar at Palomar continued from page 1

The screening will be immediately followed by a question and answer session with the filmmakers and a presentation on a giant telescope of the future, Caltech's 30-Meter Telescope.



June 3, 1948 a large crowd assembled as the 200-inch telescope was officially dedicated as the Hale Telescope. The screening of *The Journey to Palomar* will close a 60-year circle as Hale's story, and that of the creation of his telescopes is told again inside the mighty dome.

The Journey to Palomar will be seen nationally on PBS on Monday, November 10 (check local listings), but this advance screening will be the only advance opportunity to see the film under one of Hale's giant telescopes.

Seating for this event is *very* limited. All tickets to the event must be purchased in advance by 12 noon on Thursday, October 30. More information is available at

<http://www.astro.caltech.edu/palomar/jtp>

or by calling (760) 742-xxxx.

Event tickets for this charity screening are priced at three different levels:

\$150 – admission to the event

\$500 – admission to the event, *The Journey to Palomar* DVD (available after Nov. 10) autographed by the filmmakers

\$1,000 – preferred seating for the event, *The Journey to Palomar* DVD (available after Nov. 10) autographed by the filmmakers, hand-made model of Hale Telescope in a glass display dome, donor recognition at outreach center.

Journey to Palomar on PBS continued from page 1

ever, came at a high personal cost. He struggled to overcome a nervous condition, brought on by overwork, commonly referred to as “neurasthenia.” His unusually fragile constitution was no match for his “Chicago ambition,” as historian Kevin Starr says. Hale suffered a series of collapses, including frightening hallucinations. As author Richard Preston describes in the film, “Hale’s mental problems are very much a part of his creative genius, his brilliance.” Hale didn’t live to see the completion of his greatest masterpiece, the Palomar Mountain telescope, yet he succeeded in creating an “American science.”

The Journey to Palomar highlights the crucial role of Hale’s observatories in the establishment, growth and strengthening of the nation’s scientific institutions during his lifetime. The progress of U.S. science was intertwined with other signs of national progress, including the rise of Chicago as America’s business powerhouse, the rise of California as a center of innovation, and the nation’s industrial and economic development in competition with Europe. The film depicts the roles of people from multiple levels of American society all working toward the goal of discovering the larger truth of the universe — everyone from glass workers in Corning, New York, to scientific geniuses like Albert Einstein and Edwin Hubble to American “captains of industry” like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Chicago streetcar baron Charles Yerkes.

The Journey to Palomar unfolds like a drama that follows the course of Hale’s accomplished but difficult life and the achievements that continued in his name even after his death.

The Journey to Palomar was inspired by author Ronald Florence’s 1994 book *The Perfect Machine*. The film took top honors at the 2007 Temecula Valley Film & Music Festival, winning the Audience Choice award for best documentary.

While the film is scheduled to be shown nationally on PBS the night of November 10, local affiliates may show it at different times. Be sure to check your local listings to find the broadcast.

Palomar’s New Outreach Center

Due to declining enrollment the Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District decided to close the Palomar Mountain School last June. Located just outside the gates of the observatory, the school has served observatory employees and other mountain residents for decades. Long ago the land was leased from Caltech and the terms of the lease have now returned the land and its buildings back into their hands.

The school district’s decision has opened a new door on public outreach for Palomar Observatory. One building is just about ready for the Friends of Palomar Observatory to begin holding lecture events. That’s just the beginning as telescopes will eventually be installed for Friends of Palomar and public viewing events. Included in the mix will be the historic 10-inch refractor which for decades served as the guide scope for Palomar’s 48-inch Schmidt. The photo shows astronomer Edwin Hubble looking through the same telescope that will soon be available for visitors to look through.

Proceeds from the charity screening of *The Journey to Palomar* taking place on November 2nd will help to make this new observing program a reality.



Friends of Palomar Observatory
P.O. Box 200
Palomar Mountain, CA 92060-0200



Friends of Palomar Observatory Annual Membership Application

Student/Senior Citizen Member \$30 Individual Member \$45 Family Membership \$75

New Member Renewal Donation _____

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Check Visa Mastercard (circle one)

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For questions call (760) 742-2111, e-mail friendsofpalomar@astro.caltech.edu, or visit
www.friendsofpalomarobservatory.org