

emphasized what he had written to Burckhalter a few weeks earlier: "The main point is that the non-professional members shall take an active interest in it, and I think that they will." He remarked upon the great diversity in backgrounds of the members, and hoped that "every class will find a sphere of action in our programme, a stimulus in our proceedings, and a support in our friendly organization." The professional astronomers would benefit by having to explain their work to a lay audience; the amateurs with telescopes would get suggestions as to how best to use their equipment for pleasure and useful results; the photographers would contribute their expertise; some members might have time and energy to devote to the computations necessary to reduce others' observations; and the learners would have ample opportunity to read, listen, and observe. Holden felt very strongly that "meetings should never consist of mere lectures, no matter how interesting. There should be discussion, questions, remarks, interchange of ideas, contact of active minds."

One of the first projects he envisioned for the Society was the creation of an astronomical library, which would be available to all members, and he suggested a list of basic books. The Society should also produce its own publications, which it would give to members and exchange with other astronomical institutions. These publications might include summaries of work at Lick Observatory, but also observations and papers from amateur members, and perhaps translations and reprintings of important papers in other journals. "We should be extremely careful to make our publications fully worthy of the society." He also remarked that "the observations and communications from the amateur members of the society should always constitute the greater part of the publication." But almost from the start this was rarely the case, and at the beginning the Lick astronomers contributed most of the articles. Holden himself wrote many of these, to the point where some of his enemies accused him of making the *Publications* a personal vehicle for self-promotion. But it seems more likely that he merely wanted to insure the success of the Society by keeping the *Publications* active.

Holden concluded his talk with several practical suggestions of projects for the amateur members: photography of the Sun, visual study of the Moon's surface, timing occultations of stars by the Moon, recording the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites, experiments on photography of the zodiacal light, the aurora, and the Milky Way, and the observation of variable stars. If some of these things are done, he said, then "we may look forward to a career of real usefulness not only to our members, but to the science of Astronomy."

Chapter 3:

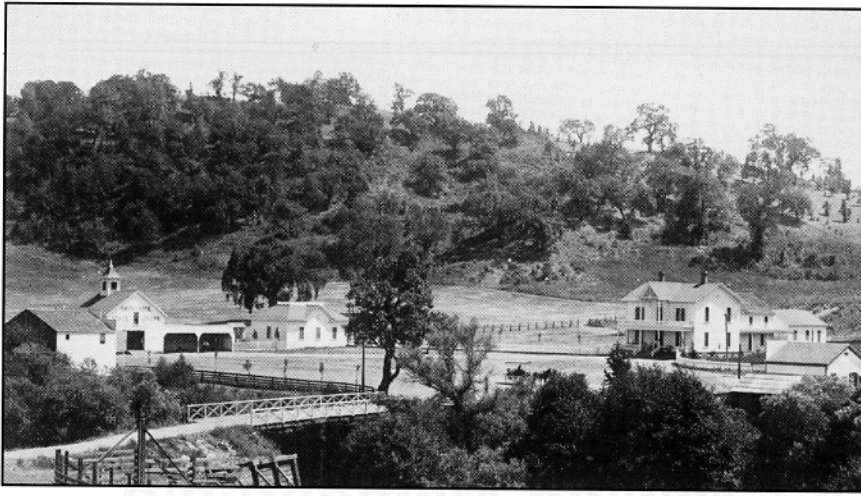
A Meeting at Lick and a Growing Membership

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the new Society was held on May 25, at Lick Observatory. A trip to Mount Hamilton in 1889 was no trivial task. Members had to take early morning trains to San Jose, where they were met by stage coaches. They were instructed that "the start from San Jose should be made very promptly at ten o'clock, in order to arrive at Smith Creek [a hotel and livery stable part way up the mountain] about half past one. Here, dinner can be had, and by starting promptly, the summit can be reached about four o'clock." (Today the same trip is made by automobile in two hours or so.)

Once the group arrived at Lick, the directors held a meeting in the library, and the Society meeting followed immediately. From seven until ten o'clock the telescopes were open to visitors; Society members could stay after the other visitors left, and observe other



An advertisement in Sunset magazine July 1902 placed by the Hotel Vendome to attract visitors to Lick Observatory. (A.S.P. archives)



Smith Creek Hotel near Mt. Hamilton around the turn of the century. This is where most — but not all — of the A.S.P. members who participated in the Society's first outing to Lick Observatory spent the night after their time at the telescopes. (Photograph courtesy of the Mary Lea Shane Archives of Lick Observatory.)

objects. Some members were invited to stay overnight in the residences of the astronomers; those who could not be so accommodated were asked to leave the mountain about 11:30 and return to Smith Creek, where rooms would be ready for them at the hotel. The total cost of the trip for each member (train, wagon, meals, hotel) was around \$8.

About thirty-five members made the trip and attended the meeting. Ten new members were elected; Pierson presented a paper on the Sun's corona; objects such as Saturn, Uranus, and the Ring Nebula were observed with Lick's 36-inch refractor. Burckhalter later wrote a letter of thanks to Holden and had high praise from the members "for the Lick Observatory and the 'astronomical brigade of good fellows.'" Only one thing upset him: a few members who had not been invited to spend the night on the mountain stayed anyway. He commented to Holden that "these members showed bad taste in not going. They won't do it again!!! ...I shall not hesitate to tell would-be Observatory campers, that it isn't just the thing to turn the Observatory into a dormitory."

Burckhalter also commented on the continued support of many of the members. On May 27 he received a \$100 check from William Alvord for two more life memberships, for his wife and his son. "He sends it 'thinking our young society may be in need of funds' etc." Alvord could well afford such generosity: he was president of the Bank of California, and a distinguished former mayor of San Francisco.

Alvord's service to the A.S.P. included being on the Board of Directors from 1889-1894 and again in 1897, when he was elected the Society's eighth president. From the beginning he actively recruited new members. He urged that reports of the A.S.P. meetings should be given to the daily newspapers, and especially to the Evening Bulletin, for "it is from its readers we are more likely to gain new members, than from the readers of the morning press."

In that first year of the Society's life, Alvord wrote Holden that he had sent card circulars soliciting membership "to men who are easily able to subscribe for several Life Memberships and I hope good results will follow." He sent out over fifty of them, "sending them in stamped envelopes to the residences of those addressed. Sending to places of business is not a good plan, for they are likely to be thrown in the waste-basket without being read." (Human nature seems not to have changed much.) In late July the Society met again at Lick, and elected more new members for a total of 120, eighteen of whom were life members. The list included prominent San Francisco citizens such as Colonel Charles F. Crocker, Charles S. Cushing, Alexander Montgomery, D. O. Mills, Joseph A. Donohoe, and others. In geographical spread, the Society now reached Nevada and Mexico, as well as California. By the end of the year there were also members from Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Canada, England, and even Venezuela, bringing the membership to 178.

A stagecoach en route to Lick Observatory in the early days. While indistinct in this photograph, the Observatory is on the highest point on the horizon, the summit of Mt. Hamilton. Readers familiar with Lick Observatory today will note that the character of the mountain's foliage has changed dramatically during the last century; the slopes are now more densely forested. (Photograph courtesy of the Mary Lea Shane Archives of Lick Observatory.)

