

Past Presidents of the Los Angeles Astronomical Society, Inc.

Founded 1926



Incorporated 1929

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Compiled by L. Chilton, March 2012; revised June 5, 2013 (e-mail: trainfans2@sbcglobal.net)

Note: this list is neither complete nor entirely accurate and is subject to revision at any time. Please advise of omissions or inaccuracies.

Abbreviations used below

AL = Astronomical League; ATM = Amateur Telescope Maker; ATMS-LA = Amateur Telescope Makers Soc. of Los Angeles;
GO = Griffith Observatory; GOM = Griffith Observer magazine; MWO = Mt. Wilson Observatory; MWOA = Mt. Wilson
Observatory Assn.; RTMC = Riverside Telescope Makers Conference; S&T = Sky & Telescope; WAA = Western Amateur

- November 1926 Telescope Makers and Amateur Astronomers Society
- December 1926 Amateur Telescope Makers Society of Los Angeles
- 1929 Amateur Telescope Makers Society of Los Angeles, Inc.
- ~1935 Amateur Astronomical Society, Inc.
- December 1939 Los Angeles Astronomical Society, Inc.

If any individual deserves credit for the founding of the Los Angeles Astronomical Society, then that honor must go to a Long Beach Polytechnic High School student named Charleton F. Chute. His high school activities included membership in the Scientific Research Society, the Electrical Research Society and the Chess Club.

During his 1925 senior year, Chute wrote to the *Scientific American* requesting a list of contacts in the Los Angeles area who, like him, were interested in astronomy and telescope-making. In November 1926, most of the people whose names were provided to Chute attended the first organizational meeting of the Telescope Makers & Amateur Astronomers. That first meeting was held in the Reading Room of the recently completed downtown L.A. Public Library.

Chute matriculated Polly High in 1925, graduated UCLA in 1929 with a degree in Political Science, and earned a doctorate in Public Administration at the University of Chicago in 1935. During his college years in Los Angeles, he became a popular entertainer of prestidigitation (magic). He began his career with the federal government in Washington D.C. and later taught at the University of North Carolina and NYU. Following his 1973 retirement, he was named Professor Emeritus of the NYU Graduate School of Public Administration. Chute was born in Peru, Indiana in 1906 and died in Norwalk, Connecticut in 1985.



Year	Name	Comments
1926-1927	John Avarad Gayton (1893-1968)	1st president; advertising exec., oil industry
1928	John A. Gayton (1893-1968)	Dr. G. Carroll Wagonner, V.P.; Frank Mergenthaler, Sec.; David P. Bradbury, Treas.; Charlton F. Chute, Librarian & Corres. Sec.; James Herron, Custodian
1929	John A. Gayton (1893-1968)	
1930	? Frank M. Hicks (1860-1930)	Questionable if Hicks was an ATMS-LA president; railroad industrialist and ATM (inventor of the Pasadena-style Springfield mount?)
1931	Mars S. Baumgardt (1890-1950)	Year of presidency a wild guess, but early in the club's history; widely known popularizer of science and astronomy
1932	?	
1933	Archie M. Newton (1878-1952)	Helped organize the ATMS-LA; 1st secretary; served 4 terms as pres. (Source: GOM, Apr 1948, p. 45)
1934	?	
1935	?	
1936	?	
1937	Ben S. Beery (1901 -1952)	year of presidency a wild guess; municipal court judge (Source: GOM, May 1953, p. 58)
1938	?	
1939	?	Geo. Herbig was the club secretary
1940	Mr. Ross	
1941	Archie M. Newton (1878-1952)	
1942	Archie M. Newton (1878-1952)	Robert Leo Cotton (1880-1946), acting president for A.M. Newton; photographer, landscape artist, illustrator; art director, Los Angeles Examiner newspaper
1943	John Howard McCormack (1898-1987)	
1944	Archie M. Newton (1878-1952)	
1945	Ralph W. Dietz (1912-1993)	Mt. Wilson Observatory Optical Dept.; Optical Society of Southern California councilor, 1956-1957
1946	George W. Bunton, Jr. (1910-1995)	GO technician; went on to direct the Morrison Planetarium (San Francisco) and Bishop Planetarium (Hawaii)
1947	Harry L. Freeman (1888-1953)	executive, Caterpillar Tractor Co.; joined LAAS in 1939; ATM; (see obit. In May 1953 GOM, pp. 57-58)
1948	Rev. D.V. Johnstone	
1949	Walter DePalma	
1950	Thomas R. Cave, Jr. (1923-2003)	joined LAAS in summer 1939; co-founder, Cave Optical Co.; respected planetary observer; WAA G. Bruce Blair medalist (1969); RTMC Clifford W. Holmes Award (2000); main belt asteroid 62503 Tomcave (2000)
1951	Dr. Homer P. King	(Sources: GOM, Oct. 1951, p. 112; Sky & Telescope, March 1952, p. 113)
1952	Leslie F. Mawhinney (1903-1977)	(Source: S&T, March 1952, p. 113); newspaper reporter/journalist
1953	? George A. Carroll (1902-1987)	master instrument builder; WAA G. Bruce Blair medal (1971)
1954		
1955	Thomas A. Cragg (1927-2011)	(Source: GOM, Jun 1955, p. 69)
mid-1950s	Clarke M. Harris (1918-2001)	(Source: Brian Bell in an e-mail dated 4/26/2012)
1956	Chalmers B. Myers (1900-1965)	known as "Chief" Myers, banker-stock broker (Source: GOM, Feb 1956, p. 22)
1957	Clarence L. Browning (1897-1987)	(Ref: Galilean, Vol. 3, No. 4) patent attorney
1958	Elliot S. Hastings (1892-1961)	(Ref: Galilean, Vol. 2, No. 5)
1959	George Perkins	
1960	Thomas A. Cragg (1927-2011)	longtime member, AAVSO; WAA G. Bruce Blair medalist (1963); AL Leslie Peltier Award (var. stars)(1991); solar observer, MWO; observer, Siding Spring Observatory, NSW
1961	James D. Benson	
1962	? Carl C. Langevin (1897-1973)	owner of Telescopes in Hollywood (Year of presidency uncertain)
1963	Rev. Ronald E. Royer (1932-)	parish priest; member AAVSO, pioneer in tri-color astrophotography; main belt asteroid 5208 Royer, 1989; WAA G. Bruce Blair medal (2001)
1964	Thomas J. Johnson (1923-2012)	founder of Celestron-Pacific; WAA G. Bruce Blair medalist (1993)



John Gayton



F. Hicks



Archie M. Newton



Harry L. Freeman



Tom Cave



George Carroll



Tommy Cragg















Clarke Harris



Royer



Tom Johnson

1965	Larry C. Bornhurst (1928-)	Supt., MWO; co-designer/builder Clinton B. Ford Observatory; Asst. Dir. and faculty member, Univ. of Ariz. Dept. of Astronomy; specialist in cataclysmic variables; installed 80-inch aluminizing chamber, Mt. Lemmon Observatory; worked at the Vatican Observatory and assisted in construction of observatories in Chile and Argentina; ; HAM radio operator; motorcycle racing enthusiast	 Larry Bornhurst
1966	F. Jack Eastman (1939-)	optical designer; WAA G. Bruce Blair medalist (2003)	 Jack Eastman
1967	? Gordon Hendrie Mitchell (1912-1981)	started the Christmas awards banquet tradition	
1968	Fred Larson		
1969	Norman James	automotive designer/engineer; creator of the 1st sphere mounts	 Norman James
1970	Ronald R. McKnight (1941-)	purchased land in Lockwood Valley for LAAS in March 1970 and established Star Membership to finance it.	 Ron McKnight
1971	Edward Johnston		
1972	Arthur W. Johnson, Jr. (1949-)	musician (organ) and classical radio music station(KUSC) disc jockey while attending USC;	 Arthur W. Johnson
1973	Arthur W. Johnson, Jr. (1949-)	resigned to accept position as director of the Reno, Nev. Fleischmann Planetarium; V.P. Thomas Cragg completed year	
1974	Ronald R. McKnight (1941-)	purchased land in Lockwood Valley for LAAS in March 1970	
1975	Thomas R. Cave, Jr. (1923-2003)	see year 1950	
1976	Michael S. Simmons (1949-)	Minor Planet Simmons named in 2003; RTMC Clifford W. Holmes Award (2005); WAA G. Bruce Blair medalist (2009);	 Mike Simmons
1977	Michael S. Simmons (1949-)	founder, Astronomers without Borders; past president, MWOA	
1978	Lewis J. Chilton (1943-)	club historian, newsletter editor, shop director, board	 Lew Chilton
1979	David D. Sovereign (1937-)	aerospace engineer	
1980	Thomas W. Wallace		
1981	Thomas W. Wallace		
1982	? Thomas W. Wallace		
1983	? Thomas W. Wallace		
1984	Tom Dorff	gardener - tree trimmer	
1985	Tom Dorff		
1986	Tom Dorff		
1987	Tom Dorff		
1988	Tom Dorff		
1989	Tom Dorff		
1990	Timothy J. Thompson (1949-)	physicist and linguist; chess champion; retired from JPL	 Tim Thompson
1991	Timothy J. Thompson (1949-)		
1992	Timothy J. Thompson (1949-)		
1993	Roger Keen	planetarium lecturer, GO	 Roger Keen
1994	Eugene H. Hanson (1946 - 2007)	machine shop foreman for Price-Pfister, Pacoima, Calif.	
1995	Eugene H. Hanson (1946 - 2007)		
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1997	Timothy J. Thompson (1949-)		
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2003	James Strogen	Sr. Night Asst., 100" telescope, Mt. Wilson Institute; Traveling Astronomer, GO	 James Strogen
2004	?		
2005	David D. Sovereign (1937-)		
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2010	Timothy J. Thompson (1949-)		
2011	Mary Brown	Education Chair, Optical Society of Southern California, 2004-2009;	
2012	Mary Brown	first female LAAS president	 Mary Brown
2013	Mary Brown		