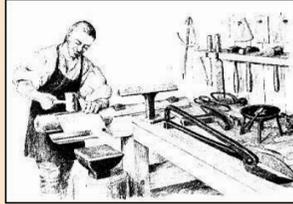


THE OBSERVATORY ON LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

Locals Crafted the Dome and Equipment for the Telescope

Metalwork on the observatory dome was undertaken by Frank Hanna, an Austrian immigrant and "tinner" or tinsmith, and his son Henry. The elder Hanna was an expert tinner and was the only tradesman of this kind in the southwest country. The observatory dome was made of heavy imported tin that was fitted and soldered by the Hannas. It was made so that the window, or slit, through which the telescope was sighted could be turned to allow observation of any point in the sky.



By September, a contract was let "to the Henry foundryman for furnishing the revolving machinery—cogs, wheels, etc.—for the Del Norte observatory." Later that month, it was somewhat wistfully observed that: "The wonderful new star in Andromeda Nebula could probably be seen from the Del Norte observatory were the telescope in position."

[Museum Trail Site](#)

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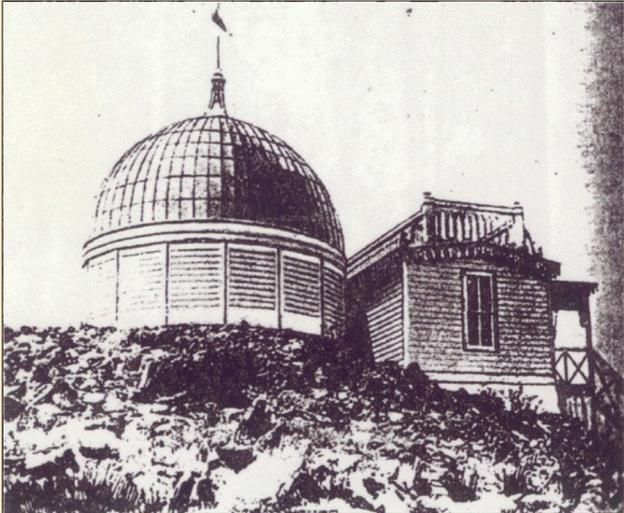
[Lookout Mountain
Observatory Assn](#)

Contact Us

The Lookout Mountain
Observatory Association
PO Box 432
Del Norte, CO 81132
Or Email Alva Hibbs

Thanks to Dr. A.J. Taylor
of the Rio Grande County
Museum for compiling
these stories for us.

The Much-Anticipated Arrival of the Telescope



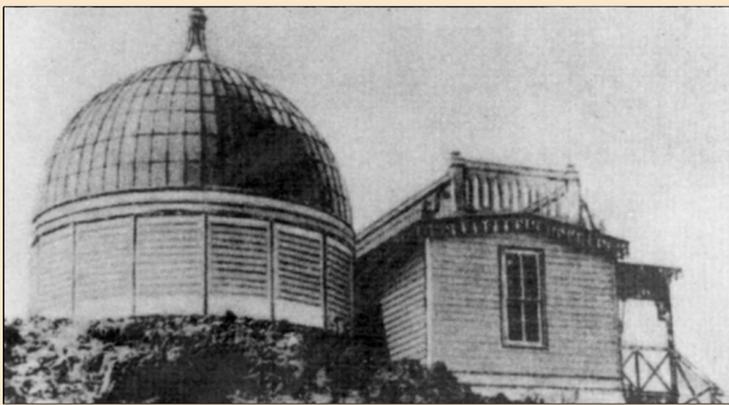
Finally, on December 5, 1885, the *San Juan Prospector* was able to report that part of the "monster telescope" had arrived in Del Norte. An article, taken from the *Pittsburg Dispatch*, was quoted: "Mr. J.A. Brashear has just completed a large telescope for the Presbyterian College of the Southwest, at Del Norte, Colorado. This telescope is perhaps the finest he has yet built, having all the accessories needed for complete observations. The aperture of the telescope is 9 1/2 Inches, and the focal length nearly ten feet. It is mounted on a heavy equatorial pedestal, but everything is so nicely balanced that the whole

instrument may be moved by the pressure of the finger. Right ascension declination circles are provided which read by verniers, so the position of any celestial object may be found, or located when accidentally found while observing. A fine driving clock is provided, and this can be instantly thrown in gear with the telescope, and as it moves the telescope in the opposite direction from the movement of the earth on its axis and at the same rate when the telescope is set on any celestial object except the moon, it is kept constantly in the field of view as long as the observer cares to make his observations. ..."

"The whole instrument weighs over a ton, and will certainly be a great addition to the outfit of the college. An observatory has been prepared for it on the mountain, and Mr. Brashear anticipates some fine work from this telescope in the fine atmosphere of Colorado. Some fine views have been obtained with it here, it being a principal with Mr. Brashear never to send an instrument away until it satisfies the demands of the most rigorous tests. Prof. F.N. Notestein will have charge of the instrument in Del Norte, and it is likely to be used in some class of research as well as for class work. Mr. Brashear was ably assisted in the work by his wife and Mr. James McDowell in the optical work, and Mr. George and Edward Klanges in the mechanical part."

The Pride of Del Norte - Finished at Last

An illustration of the observatory building was included in the February 27, 1886 issue of the *San Juan Prospector*. The caption with it notes: "This building is equipped with one of the most powerful telescopes in the West....", and it is "the highest in the world..., the altitude being above 8,100 feet. The view from the summit of Lookout Mountain is grand in the extreme.... A good wagon-road has been constructed almost to the summit of the mountain, and the balance of the distance may be made on horseback by a good trail. The observatory building is built round with a revolving top, for the use of students of astronomy; the square room in front is for use as a reception-room."



Abandoned dome (ca. 1938)

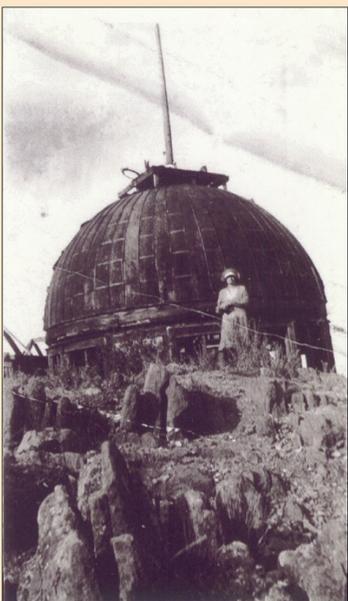
The Demise of the Observatory

The observatory building served as a popular landmark until August 18, 1940, when: "The tin dome of the old Mount Lookout observatory, once the pride and joy of the entire southwestern country, was ripped and torn away by the wind and strewn down the slopes of Mt. Lookout mountain."

Also, "The dome has been re-conditioned from time to time during the past half century. And, some of the timbers have gone to make fire-wood for those who climbed Mt. Lookout at night."

Del Norte Prospector
August 23, 1940)

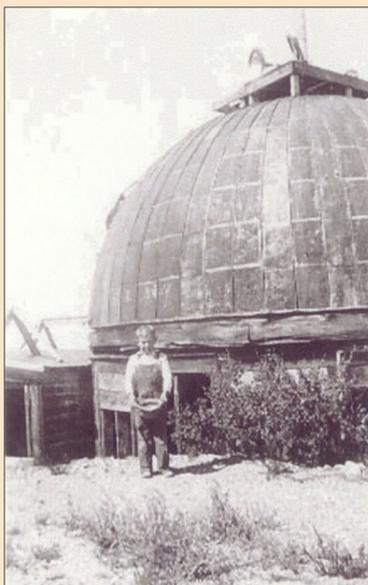
Locals Continue to Visit the Abandoned Observatory Site



For decades after the official closing of the Observatory, Del Norters enjoyed making the trek to the top of Lookout Mountain. It is, after all an outstanding landmark of the town.

At some point in time the locals painted large rocks white and fashioned them in the shape of the trademark "D" on the side of the mountain. This catches the eye of every traveler who drives through Del Norte.

And there is now the hope that one day, in the not-too-distant future, there may once again be an observatory dome seen on top of Lookout



Mountain. One that might look vaguely similar to the old dome and would even house the original telescope.

You can help... Join us at the Lookout Mountain Observatory Association - there are many ways you can contribute to our effort to bring back the history and culture of 100 years ago.

[\[Read How You Can Help: LMOA\]](#)