

# The Dominion Government Observatory at Victoria, B.C.

Perched on the top of Observatory Hill, in the environments of British Columbia's capital city, Victoria, stands the white, beautiful, dome capped cube, which houses one of the world's two largest telescopes.

When the Government of the Dominion of Canada decided to erect an Observatory with a telescope powerful enough to do first rank astronomical observation, the scientists appointed by the Government to select a site, began to rake the Dominion fore and aft to find a neighborhood where the atmosphere and the general climatic conditions were such as to afford the greatest amount of steadiness and clarity.

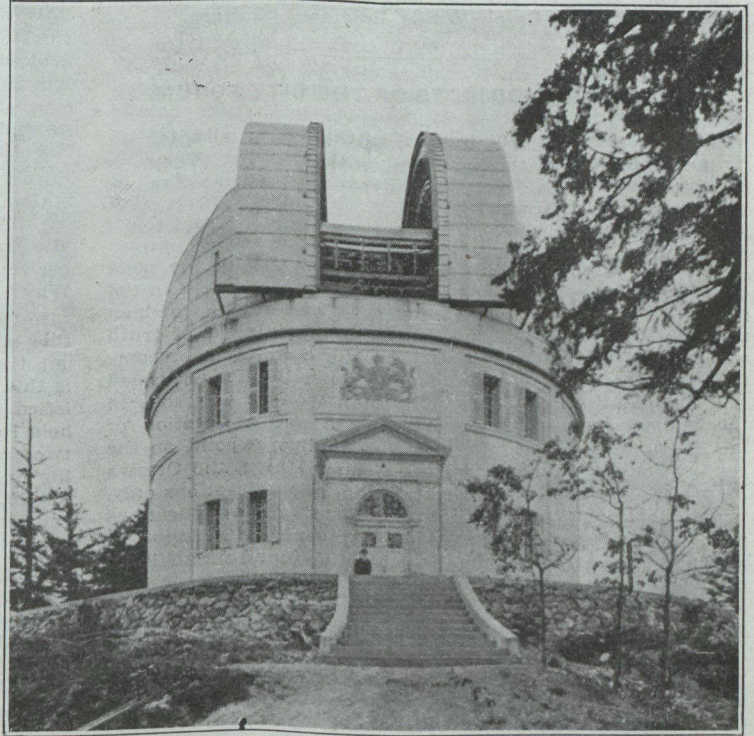
They found several places in their trek across the continent, which appeared to be equal to the required conditions—and then they reached Victoria. Thereafter there was never any question in the minds of the experts. Victoria, they reported, was not only the finest site in Canada for such an institution, but the best on the American continent, on account of its low range of temperature, and the steadiness and clearness of the atmosphere.

The building of the Observatory, and the installation of the mammoth telescope was no small task, but the work has now been completed, with the exception of the mounting of one monster mirror, and this will be done within the next week or two.

The telescope on Observatory Hill differs from the other large telescopes in the world, inasmuch as it is of the reflecting type—the type of telescope with which the public is most familiar is the refracting telescope.

The lens of the Victoria instrument is no less than 72" in diameter and 12" thick. It was cast in Belgium, and was shipped out of that country just three days before the Germans entered Liege. Next, it was passed on to Pittsburg, Pa., where it was ground and polished, and thence it was shipped to Victoria. The tube is large enough to allow a small automobile to be driven through it. The heaviest part of the telescope, called the polar axis, weighs more than nine tons and the lens alone weighs 4,000 lbs., yet one man can move the entire instrument with one hand, so evenly is it balanced.

Naturally, it takes some time to complete an institution such as an Observatory of this kind, but the work at Observatory Hill has gone on so steadily, that with the installation of the last mirror, Dr. J. S. Plaskett, the scientist in charge, and his assistant,



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will be able to settle down to work almost immediately.

With the pretty houses for the staff and their families, the garages, water towers, etc., the Observatory constitutes a little settlement in itself. A winding road, skilfully constructed, and ascending by a fairly easy gradient, makes the big Observatory readily accessible to the visitor by motor road and thousands have inspected the institution since ground was broken for the first building.

The main observatory building is constructed of steel, with a dome so built as to permit of a free circulation of air currents around a continuous passage, so that the interior temperature remains approximately constant. The whole of this dome revolves on wheels and the immense shutters, which have to be opened when observations are to be taken, can be brought directly opposite the object desired.

The motive power is electricity and there are no less than ten motors, and a score of clutches by which to operate the telescope in the dome. The total cost so far is in the neighborhood of \$400,000.

Observatory Hill, upon which the Observatory is located, is 723 feet high, and the winding road leading to the top is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length. The view from the summit is magnificent, the splendid snow-capped Olympic range of mountains, 35 miles distant, and Mt. Baker, 130 miles away, being very clear and distinct.