

# New Club May Aid City To Gain Important Spot As Center of Astronomy

An organization now is being formed which promises to be a big factor in gaining recognition for Lubbock as one of the important astronomy centers of the Southwest.

The new organization is the South Plains Astronomy Club and already has more than 30 members — including men, women, boys and girls.

A very substantial increase in this membership total is expected as the word spreads that the club is being formed.

Incidentally, the next meeting of the organization is to be held at 7:30 p.m. next Thursday in the Planetarium at the Museum on the Texas Tech campus.

A cordial invitation is being extended by present members to every person — man, woman, boy and girl — on the South Plains who is interested in astronomy to attend this meeting and to affiliate with the club. Admission to the meeting will be free and attendance will not create any obligation to join.

Principal officers of the club are Steve Ebner, Texas Tech senior, president; Joe R. Pierce, principal of Arnett Elementary School, vice president, and Jerry C. Porter, curator of education of West Texas Museum, secretary.

Prospects and hopes of the new club are exceedingly ambitious, although present planning is in the earliest possible stage. But there are hopes that the club might become an important instrument in obtaining for Lubbock the largest telescope to be found in this part of the Southwest and in the establishment of an observatory. It is hoped, also, that the activities of the club might be helpful in obtaining strengthened astronomy courses for Texas Tech.

The meetings already held have pinpointed the fact that Lubbock

and the South Plains possesses residents who are outstanding in the astronomy sense. All, of course, are amateurs.

The "dean" among them is Dr. Ralph S. Underwood, professor of mathematics at Texas Tech, who plans to retire next year. With Dr. Underwood, astronomy has been strictly a hobby. But his interest in his hobby has been attested by two important facts:

He organized the first astronomy classes ever to be formed at Texas Tech, and he has conducted them for many years.

He is the author of a book, "Jaunts Into Space," which was published by Christopher's of Boston in 1935. It is a book of textbook qualities and enjoyed considerable popularity for years after publication. However, it is now out of print, although a few copies are available in the Texas Tech library. Dr. Underwood himself has only two copies of it.

He said, however, that he is considering revising and publishing the book again following his retirement.

Mr. Ebner, the president of the new club, long has been a student of astronomy, although he is majoring in business at the college. He is a frequent lecturer during planetarium shows at the Museum and is the owner of an 8-inch telescope.

Mr. Pierce, the vice president, has learned how to make telescopic lenses and has conducted classes at the Museum in this scientific art.

Another enthusiastic member of the new club is Rogers Orr, instructor of physics and applied science at Tom S. Lubbock High School. Mr. Orr also knows how to make telescopic lenses. He has fashioned several of them, including one 10 inches in diameter which he has kept for himself.

Astronomy students explained that a 10-inch telescope would bring the viewer to within an apparent distance of less than 500 miles of the surface of the moon. Mr. Orr's 10-inch is believed to be the largest in this portion of the Southwest.

No one pretends that Lubbock can ever be an astronomical center to rival such places as Mt. Wilson and Palomar in California, the Lowell observatory at Flagstaff, Ariz., and many of the other really big ones.

But they believe that this city can become sufficiently important to provide the groundwork of training for young men and women who might aspire to astronomy as a career.

And, incidentally, despite our dust, the "seeing" through telescopes in Lubbock is much better than in about 90 per cent of the remainder of the nation. The weather interruptions here are less serious than in most parts of the country.