

## THE HISTORY OF ANTARCTIC ASTRONOMY

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Astronomy, in the early days of Antarctic exploration, has played a negligible role apart from its use as a navigational aid. Although the first proposal for an Antarctic telescope was made as early as 1912 by Admiral R.E. Peary, the beginnings were of a much simpler nature: A meteorite was discovered by Mawson in 1912, laying on top of the ice, initiating the *Era of Astrogeology*. As the technology became available to conduct cosmic ray science, Geiger counters were brought to Antarctica, and the *Era of High Energy Astrophysics* emerged in the 1950's. To a substantial amount, this early work is credited to the Australian cosmic ray scientist Leslie Martin, who was the first scientist to conduct astrophysical observations south of the Antarctic circle as well as at Mawson Station beginning in 1955. Yet again decades later in the 1970's -1990's, the advantages of the high and exceedingly dry climate of the Antarctic Plateau were established through site testing experiments and a number of projects exploring the sky in the infrared and sub millimetre ranges of the electromagnetic spectrum, giving birth to the *Era of Photon Astrophysics*. The results obtained from some of these experiments (DASI and Boomerang) in fact were so spectacular that they made the front page of "Nature" magazine twice in one year.

Antarctica continues to be the location of choice for a number of detectors both due to its unique geographical location, its particularly well suited and almost space-like atmosphere for infrared and submillimetre Astronomy as well as its distinctive ground characteristics, allowing for Cerenkov radiation detectors of enormous size. The history of Antarctic Astronomy is not just history, it is in fact history in the making.