

Historic Clark telescope to reopen
After nearly 2 years the Clark telescope is back and ready for action

Flagstaff, Az- Lowell Observatory's historic Clark Telescope will soon return to tour operations after a 20-month-long renovation project. The Observatory will add the Clark back to its day time tour schedule on September 5. Lowell will host a first light opening on October 3 to which the public is invited to come view through the telescope in the evening. This will feature family-friendly activities, a rededication ceremony, and viewing through the Clark after dark, weather permitting.

The Clark had been a mainstay of the visitor experience to Lowell for decades, but the constant heavy use resulted in parts wearing out. By 2013, the instrument was in danger of permanent damage if corrective measures weren't taken, so the Observatory undertook a fundraising campaign to support a complete renovation of the telescope and the dome that houses it.

Led by major donations from philanthropists Joe Orr and the Toomey Foundation for the Natural Sciences, plus a crowdfunding effort, the Observatory raised nearly \$300,000 to complete the work.

Samantha Christensen played a lead role in the fundraising effort and now serves as the Observatory's Outreach Manager. She said, "The Clark was in desperate need of repair and the community at large really came together to support this project."

Led by Lowell's Director of Technical Services Ralph Nye, a crew removed the telescope and examined every part, down to the nuts and bolts. Their two-part goal was to return all parts to working order while cleaning and beautifying the facility. They repaired or replaced components as needed and reassembled the instrument in the dome, which also saw major repairs. The telescope now works better than when it was first built and the entire facility sparkles.

Lowell Observatory Director Jeffrey Hall said, "Hundreds of thousands of people have enjoyed the opportunity to peer through the Clark in the past. We are pleased to complete this much-needed renovation so many more in the future can experience this treasure."

Observatory founder Percival Lowell commissioned the eminent optician and telescope maker, Alvan G. Clark, to build the Clark in 1896. The final product cost Lowell \$20,000 and was one of the best refracting telescopes ever made.

For decades, the telescope was used for major astronomical research, including Percival Lowell's controversial studies of Mars, V.M. Slipher's first detection of the expanding nature of the universe, and mapping the moon for the Apollo program. It played a secondary role in the discovery of Pluto and was used by astronauts as they trained for moon mission.

In recent decades, the Clark had been used for the Observatory's public programs, allowing every guest to tour it during the day and view through it at night.

Lowell historian Kevin Schindler said, "The Clark's scientific, historical, and cultural importance is staggering. It has played a major role in understanding the universe around us, first as a research instrument and later as an educational tool. Now that it is reopened, its legacy of inspiring and educating the public can continue."

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About Lowell Observatory

Lowell Observatory is a private, non-profit research institution founded in 1894 by Percival Lowell. The Observatory has been the site of many important discoveries including the detection of the large recessional velocities (redshift) of galaxies by Vesto Slipher in 1912-1914 (a result that led ultimately to the realization the universe is expanding), and the discovery of Pluto by Clyde Tombaugh in 1930. Today, Lowell's 14 astronomers use ground-based telescopes around the world, telescopes in space, and NASA planetary spacecraft to conduct research in diverse areas of astronomy and planetary science. The Observatory welcomes about 80,000 visitors each year to its Mars Hill campus in Flagstaff, Arizona for a variety of tours, telescope viewing, and special programs. Lowell Observatory currently operates four research telescopes

at its Anderson Mesa dark sky site east of Flagstaff and the 4.3-meter Discovery Channel Telescope near Happy Jack, Arizona.