

Member's Handbook

Stockton Astronomical Society
February 2017

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Origins and Purpose

The Stockton Astronomical Society was founded in 1950 by a group of local astronomy enthusiasts led by Stockton physician Clarence Custer.

Incorporated as a non-profit corporation in 1953, the purpose of the Society was stated, in its first constitution, to be to "foster interest in astronomy and telescope making, and promote general knowledge of the subject."

During 1951, the first full year of Society operations, a program was undertaken of bringing astronomy to the public by showing films in rental halls. An estimated 1,000 people were reported to have attended one such event.

Forty years later, the Society's goal remains the same. In 1991, in addition to the lecture programs presented at its monthly meetings, the Society provided public viewing opportunities at: eight public schools, four series of programs at the Clever Planetarium, the Nature Nights program at the Oak Grove Regional Park, the City of Stockton's Silver Lake Summer Camp, the opening of San Joaquin Delta College's Science Center, and SJDC on Astronomy Day and the July eclipse event.

Organizational Structure

The day-to-day affairs of the Society are managed by the Society President, Vice-President/Program Director, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor and Secretary.

These officers are joined by a minimum of two Members-At-Large to form an Executive Committee which coordinates the activities of the Society and formulates policies to be recommended to the general membership.

The officers and members-at-large are elected at the November general membership meeting and serve the following year from January 1 to December 31.

Anyone with a basic or student membership may serve on the Executive Committee.

In addition to its elected officers, the Society is also served by several officers who are appointed by the Executive Committee. As necessary the Executive Committee may appoint additional officers such as: the Librarian, Equipment Manager, Astronomical League Representative, Star Party Coordinator, Star Party Web Group Administrator, Striking Sparks Program Coordinator, Web Site Administrator, ATM Workshop Coordinator, Public Outreach Coordinator, and Observing Program Chairman.

Funding

Currently, the Society is funded by membership dues and donations.

Budget

The operating budget of the Society is prepared each year by the Executive Committee and published in Valley Skies, the Society newsletter.

The operating budget consists of expenditures for newsletter expenses, dues and donations to other organizations, Striking Sparks Program, and the speakers program.

Tax Exempt Status

The SAS is exempted from Federal income tax under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Donations to the Society (including basic and student membership dues) are tax deductible as provided for by section 170 of the Code.

Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to the Society are tax deductible for the Federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provision of sections 2055, 2106 and 2522 of the Code.

Monthly Meetings

Currently, the Executive Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month, and the general Society meeting is held on the second Thursday of each month.

These meetings normally take place in room 120 of Olson Hall at the University of the Pacific.

In January, the Society holds its annual "Officer Installation & Recognition" dinner.

Newsletter

The Society publishes a monthly newsletter, Valley Skies which contains information about Society activities, monthly meetings, and other news of general interest to the astronomy enthusiast.

Star Parties & Light Etiquette

Don't use white lights. Use red lights sparingly. Bright red lights are almost as bad as a white light. Use a dim red light if you must use one at all. If you absolutely must use a white light, shout out a warning to give people a chance to cover their eyes, so you can avoid ruining the night vision of others.

Make sure your vehicle lights don't violate the first rule. Backup lights and interior lights can ruin someone's night vision or astro-photograph. If you are planning to leave before the event is over, park so as to be able to leave without using your lights or put duct tape over them. Many new vehicles do not allow you to turn off headlights while the car is in Drive.

Sometimes it's just not avoidable when driving in and out of a site. Try to arrive before sunset, and when leaving, please give everyone PLENTY of warning before starting your car. If you come to a star party without a telescope, please park some distance away from the observing site to save room for those with heavy equipment to carry.

Many astronomers use lasers (green) to point out the position of objects in the sky. If you use or own one be careful to not point it at other people, cars, airplanes, etc. Please do not allow others to use your laser especially children at any public star party event. For astronomical purposes, lasers do not need to be more powerful than 50mW. Many are typically around 20 mW. The ones you can buy legally in the United States are 5mW but it is currently legal to own a laser at any power output.

Public Star Parties

The Society holds monthly sky viewing sessions “star parties” for its members and the general public.

SAS members are encouraged to participate in at least a few of these events per year. If you borrow a loaner scope, participation is expected. If you can help your fellow members at school star parties or other public event, please give your contact info to the Public Outreach Coordinator.

Maps to star party sites and other pertinent information are available on the Society website and within the Valley Skies newsletter.

Because of the unpredictable nature of the weather, it is advisable to contact the Public Outreach Coordinator prior to attending one of these events.

Club Star Parties

Every month on the Saturday, nearest the New Moon, the Society holds a viewing session at Peddler Hill on Highway 88. If Peddler Hill is inaccessible an alternate site may be used at the emergency Heliport also on Highway 88.

Every month on the Saturday, nearest the 3rd Quarter Moon, the Society holds a viewing session at Highway 4.

Maps to star party sites and other pertinent information are available on the Society website and within the Valley Skies newsletter.

Because of the unpredictable nature of the weather, it is advisable to contact the High Altitude Star Party Coordinator prior to attending one of these events.

Discounts

Magazines are available to members at a discount.

Sky and Telescope: written for advanced amateur and professional astronomers.

Astronomy: This magazine is directed more toward the “person on the street.”

Astronomy Technology Today: This magazine focuses on equipment, accessories, and other gear.

Observer's Handbook: published annually by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, this 250+ page handbook is filled with useful information, tables and lists regarding the rising and setting of the Sun and Moon, eclipses, comets, meteor showers, nebulae, galaxies, brightest stars and more.

Astronomical League (AL)

SAS is a member of the Astronomical League. The AL is composed of over two hundred and forty local amateur astronomical societies from all across the United States. These organizations, along with their Members-at-Large, Patrons, and Supporting members form one of the largest amateur astronomical organizations in the world. The major benefit of belonging to this organization is receiving the quarterly newsletter, The Reflector, which keeps you in touch with amateur activities all over the country. The chance to meet the people you read about occurs during their annual National Convention, or at one of the ten regional conventions that the AL sponsors. You can also partake in the many available observing programs and receive certificates upon completion.

Contact: AL Representative listed in Valley Skies

Resource Network

Beginners in astronomy, unfamiliar with the jargon and equipment, are especially encouraged to reach out to other members for help. This is best accomplished by attending one of our monthly meetings or public events.

Many members have advanced knowledge and/or skills and will volunteer their time to give advice and help to those who would like assistance.

The Society has several resources available to members including books and videos which can be loaned to members free of charge.

Contact: Any SAS board member for more info on a current list available.

Loaner Telescopes

The Society owns several telescopes which are loaned to members free of charge. Members with a scope checked out are expected to bring it to public and/or school star party events, and must maintain membership dues. You may be asked to return a Society-owned telescope at any time.

Contact: SAS Equipment Manager listed in Valley Skies

Policy:

The Equipment Manager shall be appointed by the Executive Committee.

Procedure:

- 1) Requests for use of a telescope are to be made to the Equipment Manager.
- 2) The Equipment Manager shall issue a receipt describing the telescope and its support equipment. The member shall sign and date this receipt. A copy of this receipt shall be kept on file by the Equipment Manager.
- 3) The Equipment Manager, if necessary, shall instruct a member borrowing a telescope on its use.
- 4) The Equipment Manager shall maintain an inventory listing the location and status of Society-owned telescopes and their support equipment.
- 5) The Equipment Manager shall file a copy of the telescope inventory with the Society President in December of each year.

CONSTITUTION (Amended February, 2017)**STOCKTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

A non-profit California corporation

1. NAME

The name of this organization shall be Stockton Astronomical Society

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Society is to foster interest in and promote the general knowledge of astronomy and related sciences.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Anyone interested in astronomy may become a member of the Society by complying with the requirements of this Constitution and its By-Laws.

The privilege of membership is given to those who have paid the required dues. Members who become more than ninety days in arrears in payment of dues will be dropped from membership.

• Basic Membership

Basic membership includes the entire family and will represent one vote. All members of the family may participate in all the activities and benefits of the Society.

• Student Membership

Student memberships are open to full-time students. Student members may vote, and participate in all the activities and benefits of the Society.

4. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Regular membership meetings of the Society shall be held monthly at a place and time agreed to by the membership and announced in the newsletter and local media.

A quorum for transaction of business shall consist of ten members in good standing including at least two Executive Committee members.

The floor is open for business at the request of any member in good standing at any regular monthly meeting.

5. OFFICERS

The elected officers of the Society shall be: President, Vice-President/Program Director, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Secretary, and a minimum of two Members-at-Large.

6. DUTIES OF ELECTED OFFICERS

All officers shall perform their duties according to the procedures outlined as follows.

• President:

The President shall preside at all meetings.

In the absence of, or in the event of disability to, the Treasurer, the president shall have the authority to sign checks for approved Society expenses.

The President shall recommend for appointment by the Executive Committee those non-elected officers and committees required by this Constitution and its By-Laws.

CONSTITUTION (Continued)**• Vice President/Program Director:**

The Vice-President shall assist the President and, in the absence of the president, shall preside at meetings.

As Program Director, the Vice-President shall work with other officers to secure the best possible programs for the regular monthly meetings, shall be responsible for all arrangements pertaining to the program and shall publicize the programs in the local newspaper.

• Treasurer:

The Treasurer shall collect all dues and other money due the Society and shall deposit these funds in a reputable bank under the name of Stockton Astronomical Society.

The Treasurer shall have the authority to pay bills and sign any and all checks and documents necessary to carry on the financial affairs of the Society as defined by the provisions of this Constitution and its By-Laws.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for paying in a timely manner, for all subscriptions and services made available to the members by the Society.

• Newsletter Editor:

The Newsletter Editor shall publish each month *Valley Skies*, the newsletter of the Stockton Astronomical Society, and shall distribute this newsletter, free of charge, to all members in good standing.

The Newsletter Editor shall exchange newsletters with other astronomical societies.

The Newsletter Editor shall maintain a permanent record of all Society newsletters.

• Secretary:

The Secretary shall record and preserve the minutes of meetings of the Society and Executive Committee.

7. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Society President, Vice President/Program Director, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Secretary and Members-at-Large.

8. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Executive Committee shall meet monthly at a time and place agreed to by its members and announced in the monthly newsletter.

A quorum for transaction of business shall consist of a simple majority of its members.

9. DUTIES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee shall:

- be responsible for the financial affairs of the Society;
- be responsible for all properties owned by the Society;

CONSTITUTION (Continued)

- recommend to the general membership those activities, policies and procedures necessary to carry on the affairs of the Society;
- appoint and supervise those non-elected officers and committee required by the provisions of this Constitution and its By-Laws;
- assist the Program Director in providing the best possible program for the regular monthly meetings of the Society;
- appoint a member in good standing to replace any elected officer who cannot complete their term.

10. ACTIONS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Any action of the Executive Committee may be returned for additional consideration by a majority vote of members present at any regular meeting of the Society, a quorum being present.

11. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Officers and Members-at-Large to the Executive Committee shall be elected annually at the regular November meeting.

Nominations shall be made by a nominating committee composed of a member(s) in good standing, appointed by the Executive Committee no later than September 1st. The names of the nominees shall be published in the November issue of the newsletter. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the November meeting.

The election of officers and members-at-large at the November meeting shall be by simple majority vote, a quorum being present. In the event no candidate receives a majority, there shall be a runoff election between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes. The term of office for officers and members-at-large shall be the following year from January 1st through December 31st.

12. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

Amendments to this Constitution shall be approved by a two-thirds majority vote. The By-Laws shall be approved by a simple majority vote of members present at any regular meeting, a quorum being present.

Proposed amendments to this Constitution and By-Laws shall be published in the Society newsletter prior to their consideration at a regular meeting.

BY-LAWS (Amended February, 2017)**1. MEMBERSHIP YEAR**

The membership year shall be the calendar year January 1st through December 31st.

2. DUES

Basic membership dues shall be \$20.00 per year.
Student membership dues shall be \$10.00 per year.

Basic or Student membership also includes the entire family.

Dues for the ensuing year shall become payable by October 15.

Dues for membership starting during the calendar year shall be prorated on a quarterly basis.

3. SUBSCRIPTION PUBLICATIONS

Sky & Telescope, *Astronomy*, and *Astronomy Technology Today* magazines offer discounts to SAS members. Contact the Treasurer for information.

4. SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS**• Newsletter:**

The Society shall publish and distribute to its members a monthly newsletter. The name of this newsletter shall be "Valley Skies." The newsletter shall serve as notice of monthly general membership and Executive Committee meetings, and shall contain news of Society activities as well as items of astronomy related interest.

• Member's Handbook:

The Society shall make available to its members a Member's Handbook. This handbook shall contain information about the background and structure of the Society, the various benefits available to Society members, activities and programs the Society sponsors or in which the Society is involved, the Constitution, By-Laws, policies and procedures of the Society. The handbook shall be periodically updated.

5. MEMBERSHIP IN OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Society may join or maintain membership in other astronomy-related organizations.

6. FINANCE**• Fiscal Year:**

The fiscal year of the Society shall be January 1st through December 31st.

• Operating Budget:

New and retiring members of the Executive Committee shall meet jointly at the end of the fiscal year and draw up an operating budget for the ensuing fiscal year.

The operating budget shall include only those items necessary for carrying on the basic operations of the Society.

The operating budget shall be published in the January issue of the Society newsletter.

• Other expenditures:

The Executive Committee may spend up to \$500 per year for club related expenses, not in the operating budget, without a general membership vote. The President or Treasurer shall publish these expenditures in the newsletter or at the general meeting.

BY-LAWS (Continued)

Proposals for expenditures of \$500 or more, other than those listed in the operating budget, shall be published in the Society newsletter prior to their approval at a general membership meeting.

Expenditures shall not at any time exceed the amount of funds in the treasury.

- *Annual Audit:*

At the beginning of each fiscal year, an appointed committee shall audit the finances of the Society for the previous fiscal year, and shall publish the results in the Society newsletter.

- *Distribution of Assets upon Dissolution of Society:*

Upon the winding up and dissolution of this corporation, after paying or adequately providing for the debts and obligations of the corporation, the remaining assets shall be distributed to a non-profit fund, foundation or corporation, which is organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, or scientific purposes and which has established its tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

- *Payments to Individuals:*

No part of the net earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to or for the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the expressed purposes for which it was formed.

7. LIMITS TO SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

A Brief History of the SAS

by Dorothy Tye

Editor's note: Dorothy Ty was an active and longtime member of the SAS who passed away in 1983. She wrote this historical sketch of the Society in 1980.

In 1950, Dr. Clarence Custer, with the Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society as sponsor, spear headed the move to establish an astronomical society in Stockton.

Reviewing the first formative years of the fledgling society through its newsletters, we find the first one dated November 30, 1950, with William A. Fenzel editor. It reported that "after a preliminary get-together October 14, "the first regular meeting was held November 13. "A brief initiatory address" was presented by Dr. Custer, president and Charles J. Shopke of the SVAS gave a talk entitled "An Introduction to Amateur Astronomy." During the business session that followed, dues were set at \$8 a year and included a subscription to Sky & Telescope magazine.

A program committee and a committee to draft a constitution were appointed. It was decided that a membership drive be held and that all who paid dues before the January meeting would be considered charter members.

The second newsletter January 2, 1951, reported that at the December meeting attendance was 23, five of whom were visitors "in spite of high water," the visitors having been attracted by the article in the Stockton Record the night of the meeting. In February the meeting hour was changed from 8 to 7:30 pm. In April it was noted that the Astronomical Society of the Pacific was sponsoring a move for amateur societies to affiliate with the Western Amateur Astronomers. Only ten attended that year's October meeting, and the membership fee at that time was reduced to \$5 as inducement to increase membership. That month the first membership list was published; of the 21, all considered charter members, those still with us are Custer, Carl W. Hedstrom and C.E. Lawler.

A Brief History of the SAS (Continued)

From the beginning, members were hard-working. Their aim was to build a substantial organization that would, as stated in the constitution, “foster interest in astronomy and telescope making, and promote general knowledge of the subject.”

Various innovations were tried and discarded. In 1951 an ambitious program was undertaken for renting a hall and charging admission to special programs. Films were rented and newspaper advertising purchased, all of which involved a great deal of promotional work and bookkeeping. The first such public enterprise December 14, 1951 showed a profit of only \$134.34. Although attendance at the one which followed in January was estimated at 1,000, the profit was not listed, nor were further commercial ventures mentioned. Efforts to interest the public took the form of film presentations at local clubs. In 1952 guest tickets were introduced but were soon discontinued. A try was made at mailing cards inviting possible prospects to join. Another apparent failure was an attempt to utilize name tags at meetings. But the year 1951 ended with the good news that members had obtained instruction books preparatory to grinding mirrors.

While many names appeared but briefly on the membership lists throughout the years, the January 9, 1952 roster listed 45 with two new members of which the one still with us is Dr. Arthur Sonnenberg. In July of 1952 other familiar names made the list: John Gabrian, Harvey Hardel, Anthony Lombardi, and Dr. Henry J. Osner

The first “social meeting” was held February 25, 1952 and was described as a “grand success” with “more than 30 members and wives present.” Mention was made of “annual trips” to Lick Observatory. In July of 1952 a “wiener roast and star party” was held at Mickey’s Grove. That summer a conference of the WAA, which then comprised 12 amateur groups, was hosted by the East Bay Astronomical Association. In December it was stated “The changing of our meeting day came up again, and again it was tabled. So the day is still the second Monday of the month.”

With the changing of editors, newsletters varied in style and content. For a time several members, in the first flush of enthusiasm, contributed long scholarly articles. Frequently the society’s mimeographing machine turned out barely legible copy, but the editors were industriously dedicated in their efforts to present instructive information.

In January 1953 a new idea was reported: “Refreshments are to be provided at next Monday’s meeting by energetic Ladies’ Auxiliary (on a voluntary basis?) An opportunity will be offered for all to contribute their dimes to help defray any costs.” No further mention was made, but refreshments obviously didn’t become a permanent custom.

By 1967 membership had dwindled to only 38, and attendance at meetings varied from half-a-dozen to only 10 for a very special Morrison Lecture. The next year membership was only 36. Then one of the greatest historical events in all of man’s history occurred. On July 20, 1969, astronauts landed on the moon and returned to earth safely July 24. The whole world was electrified. Suddenly everyone became space conscious. Amateur astronomical societies found more and more people attending their meetings and asking to join in order to learn about the exciting new knowledge of space.

The Space Age was here to stay. NASA sent prominent scientists from Ames Research Center to speak to us gratis, as did the University of California, Lick Observatory, and the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. Attendance at meetings jumped to 80 and 100. Membership increased in 1969 to 46, and by 1971 to 58. In 1975, with a membership of 65 (despite the fact that the excitement of space exploration had somewhat subsided for interest in more earthly problems) we celebrated our 25th anniversary with a special dinner and program presented by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.

Now, with the Space Shuttle in the offing, and the exciting probes to Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, the public’s interest has reawakened. Today we have 77 members, and attendance at meetings averages from 35 to 50. The basic struggle of any amateur astronomical society is to obtain and hold members, to provide entertaining programs, and to keep dues as low as possible. This has been successfully accomplished by our hard-working officers. We are always ready to welcome young and old, and to help them grow in the knowledge of this era’s fantastic astronomical discoveries.

Policy and Procedure Regarding Community Requests for Star Parties

Policy:

It is the policy of the Stockton Astronomical Society to provide, upon request, opportunities for public viewing through telescopes to community schools and other organizations.

Processing requests for community star parties shall be the responsibility of the Public Outreach Coordinator.

The Public Outreach Coordinator shall be appointed by the SAS Executive Committee.

Procedure:

Working with the Executive Committee, the Public Outreach Coordinator shall develop a list of those SAS members who are willing to participate in community star parties.

Working with the Executive Committee, the Public Outreach Coordinator shall develop a program for assisting local schools and other organizations with their viewing needs.