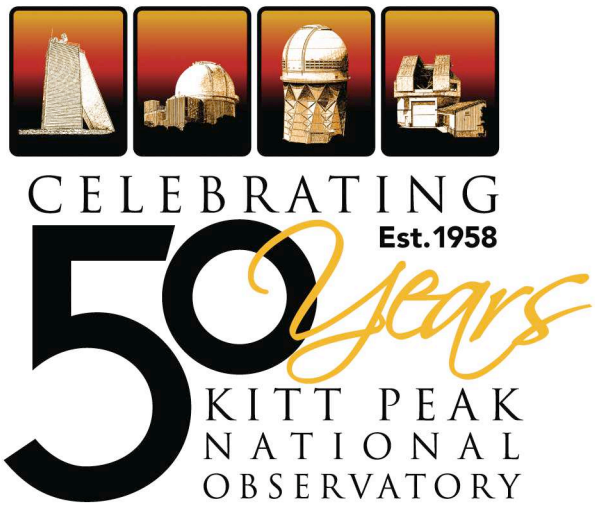

Milestones at Kitt Peak

This timeline was compiled from the book "Realm of the Long Eyes" and from literature at Kitt Peak Visitor Center by Dave Lindsley. Later adds came from "AURA and Its U.S. National Observatories" by Frank Edmondson and other sources by NOAO/University of Arizona Space Grant 2006 student Shiva Kiani.

1539

Spanish explorers arrive, and discover that the indigenous people regard the mountain Iolkam as one of the favorite places of I'itoi, the "Elder Brother."

1874

Arrival in Arizona Territory of George Roskruge, who became Pima Country Surveyor and who named Kitt Peak after his sister Philippa Kitt. Philippa did finally move to Arizona at his urging, and she died here in Arizona in 1900.

1912

Arizona becomes a U.S. state.

1930

The United States Geographic Board officially adopts 'Kitt Peak' as the name of the mountain.

1953 - August

Sponsored by the new National Science Foundation, 35 prominent Astronomers from a variety of institutions meet in Flagstaff to examine the need for a "national observatory."

1954 - January

An advisory panel of six (from the 35) forms to study costs, sites, instrumentation, etc. related to the establishment of a national observatory.

1955

The advisory panel recommends that the NSF support the establishment of national observatory, and urges immediate construction of three major telescopes, including the world's largest solar telescope.

Site selection begins with rocket photography of more than 150 mountain ranges in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah. The list of possibilities is quickly cut to about 150 sites. Aerial photography and site visits by Jeep vehicle, horseback and on foot soon follow.

1956

Permission granted by Tohono O'odham Nation for construction of a "test site" on Kitt Peak.

Possible sites are reduced to five, and mountaintops are then instrumented with 60-foot towers to measure and record wind velocity, relative humidity, temperature and other site characteristics. Data returned by these instruments soon cut the list of possibilities to two: Kitt Peak and Hualapai Mountain, southeast of Kingman.

1957 - March

The two sites are staffed by one person each and sky monitoring using 16-inch telescopes begins.

1957 – October 28

Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) Inc. created to operate Kitt Peak National Observatory for the NSF

1958 - Dr. Aden B. Meinel named the first director of Kitt Peak.

1958 – March 1

Kitt Peak is selected as the best site for the national observatory.

August 28

Lease agreement with Tohono O'odham (then the Papago tribe) approved by Congress

October 24

A permanent lease for 200 acres is signed between the Tohono Oo'dham Nation and the National Science Foundation, with 2,200 other acres of land are available for use within restrictions.

1958 - First contract pertaining to the 84-inch telescope is awarded.

1959 – June 1

Dr. Arlo Landolt first official KPNO observer

June
Completion of the design for the solar telescope.

1959 - July
Contract is awarded for construction of 84-inch telescope mount

1959 - December
Contract is awarded for construction of a paved highway.

1960 - February
Completion of the first major telescope, a 36-inch.

1960 - March 15
Kitt Peak National Observatory is dedicated

March
Construction of solar telescope begins.

March 31
Dr. Meinel resigns as observatory director.

October 1
Nicholas Mayall named observatory director; Meinel appointed as associate director of Stellar and Space Divisions.

1961 - March
Decision made that 158 inches is the appropriate size for the main mirror of the second major telescope.

1962 – March 12
Joseph W. Chamberlain appointed Associate Director of the Space Division.

November 1
First light at McMath solar telescope

November 2
Completed McMath solar telescope is dedicated.

November 23
Cerro Tololo site selected

1963 - January
New highway to the summit is opened to the public; during this first year, almost 60,000 people visit.

April 1
First light at KPNO 84-inch telescope

April 14
First KPNO Aerobee rocket flight, planned by Russell A. Nidey, takes place at White Sands Missile Range. This flight failed. Later flights that year had mixed results.

June 28
David Crawford appointed project director for 158-inch telescope.

1964 - September
84-inch telescope is available for research.

December 31
AURA signs contract with General Electric to purchase the fused silica glass blank for the 158-inch telescope.

1964 -
Kitt Peak Visitor Center completed.

1965 -
50-inch telescope installed, with early attempts at robotic control.

1967 - April
158-inch site construction begins.

David Crawford also appointed as project director for the Cerro Tololo 158-inch telescope, built in parallel with Kitt Peak's.

1967 - October
158-inch mirror blank arrives on Kitt Peak.

1968 - July
Concrete pier for the 158-inch telescope is poured.

1969 –
50-inch telescope converted to manual operation and a new mirror is installed.

1969 –
Space Division is renamed the Planetary Sciences Division.

1970 - September
Completion of 158-inch telescope building.

1971 – May 8
Symposium held to honor Nicholas Mayall on his 65th birthday.

September 1
Dr. Leo Goldberg begins term as director of Kitt Peak.

1972 – December
158-inch mirror mount installed

1973 – February 27
First light at 158-inch telescope (D. Crawford, N. Mayall, A. Hoag are first observers).

1973 – March
First photographs taken with 158-inch telescope

1973 – June 19-20
The Mayall 158-inch telescope, the world's second largest, is dedicated, completing the list of projects recommended by the original advisory panel in 1955.

July 1
Mayall telescope construction project ends; Roger Lynds becomes astronomer in charge of telescope.

1973 –
Kitt Peak rocket program ends.

1973 –
Solar vacuum telescope opens.

1978 – Dr. Geoffrey Burbidge named Director of Kitt Peak

1982 –
National Optical Astronomy Observatory formed from Kitt Peak, Cerro Tololo and the solar program

1983 – February, 14-16
25th anniversary celebration for AURA and KPNO

1983 – The solar programs at KPNO and SPO merge to form the National Solar Observatory.

1987 – August

Sidney Wolff begins term as director of NOAO

1990 – Summer
Original 0.9-meter telescope site cleared to build WIYN 3.5-meter telescope

1992 – Solar telescope renamed the McMath-Pierce on the 30th anniversary of the dedication to honor Dr. Keith Pierce, who headed the development of the telescope

March 14
Groundbreaking for WIYN telescope, designed to provide a wide-field view of the sky.

1994 – August
First NOAO page on the World Wide Web

Summer
First light at WIYN

October 15
WIYN telescope dedication ceremony

50-inch telescope closed because of budget constraints.

1996 -- August
CCD Mosaic Imager has had first light at the Mayall telescope

1997 –
Vents installed in Mayall telescope to improve temperature control.

1999—December
Sidney Wolff resigns as NOAO Director.

2000—September
George Jacoby becomes first director of WIYN.

2001 April – Jeremy Mould begins term as NOAO Director (through April 2007)

2002 – Summer
Solar vacuum telescope retired in preparation for SOLIS

2007 – February
First light for NEWFIRM imager at Mayall 4-meter

2008 – July

David Silva begins term as NOAO Director