



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

**DANIEL POSEY**

BA (University of Victoria, 2013)

**“Gateway to the Stars:”  
“Science, Civic Identity, and Tourism at the Dominion Astrophysical  
Observatory, Victoria B.C.  
1903-1941”**

Department of History

Thursday, April 14, 2016

1:00 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B215

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Richard Rajala, Department of History, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Eric Sager, Department of History, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. James Hesser, Department of Astronomy, Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Karen MacKinnon, School of Nursing, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

The Canadian astrophysics program rapidly developed between 1903 and 1914, leading to the wartime construction of what was hoped to be the world's largest research telescope. The institution opened in Victoria British Columbia in 1918 with fanfare. Throughout the 1920s, the new Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO) contributed to discoveries on the frontiers of astrophysics, while educating residents of Victoria about astronomy. In a history often overshadowed by the advent of cosmology in the 1920s, the discoveries of Victoria's astronomers produced lasting insight into the size and scale of our own galaxy. Accordingly, historians of astronomy have probed the scientific accomplishments of Canadian astronomers, devoting relatively little attention to the regional importance of these scientific facilities. The Victoria observatory itself developed into a widely visited tourism destination as staff astronomers regularly engaged in public education initiatives. This study utilizes newspaper sources, scientific papers, and contemporary publications in assessing the cultural relationship between the DAO, Victorians, and Canadians, while examining the significance of the scientific research conducted with the world's second largest telescope. In doing so it engages themes of public interest in the achievements of the institution, and Victoria's civic identity as an emerging tourism destination.