

# **The Félix Aguilar and Yale Southern Observatories**

## **A Historical Travelogue**

**Carlos E. López**  
**Félix Aguilar Observatory and**  
**Yale Southern Observatory**  
**San Juan, Argentina**

# Historical Background.

- 1718: Halley announces the proper motion of the stars.
- 1775: Mayer publishes the first proper motions catalogue.
- 1783: Herschel suggests the idea of solar motion.
- 1887: the Astrographic Catalogue is started.
- 1916: Barnard discovers his famous star.
- 1926: Schlesinger starts the Yale Zones.
- 1947: Wright starts the NPM.
- 1950: Luyten starts to survey both hemispheres for high proper motion stars.

# Historical Background (cont'd)

- 1952: the IAU suggests to extend the NPM to the south.
- 1953: the Yale – Columbia association is established.
- 1953: dedication of the Félix Aguilar Observatory.
- 1960: Giclas starts his survey.
- 1965: March 31st dedication of the Yale – Columbia Southern Observatory (YCSO). The SPM is started.
- 1968: the USNO starts the operation of a Meridian Circle at the YCSO.
- 1973: Columbia University abandoned the project.

# Historical Background (cont'd)

- 1974: San Juan University is invited to take part in the SPM program.
- 1974: Bill van Altena joins the Yale Astronomy Department.
- 1974: the USNO finishes the observations and the Meridian Circle returns to the US.
- 1974: the first epoch of the SPM is officially finished.
- 1987: Carlos U. Cesco passed away.
- 1987: the second epoch of the SPM is started.
- 1989: ESA launches the Hipparcos satellite.
- 1990: NASA launches the HST.

# Historical Background (cont'd)

- 1995: the fourth edition of the Yale Trigonometric Parallax Catalogue is published.
- 1998: the SPM 1 is published.
- 2000: Monet announces the USNO B.
- 2000: the Double Astrograph photographic plates are replaced by new CCDs.
- 2004: the SPM 3 is published (near 11 million stars).
- 2007: January 1st. Bill's formal retirement.

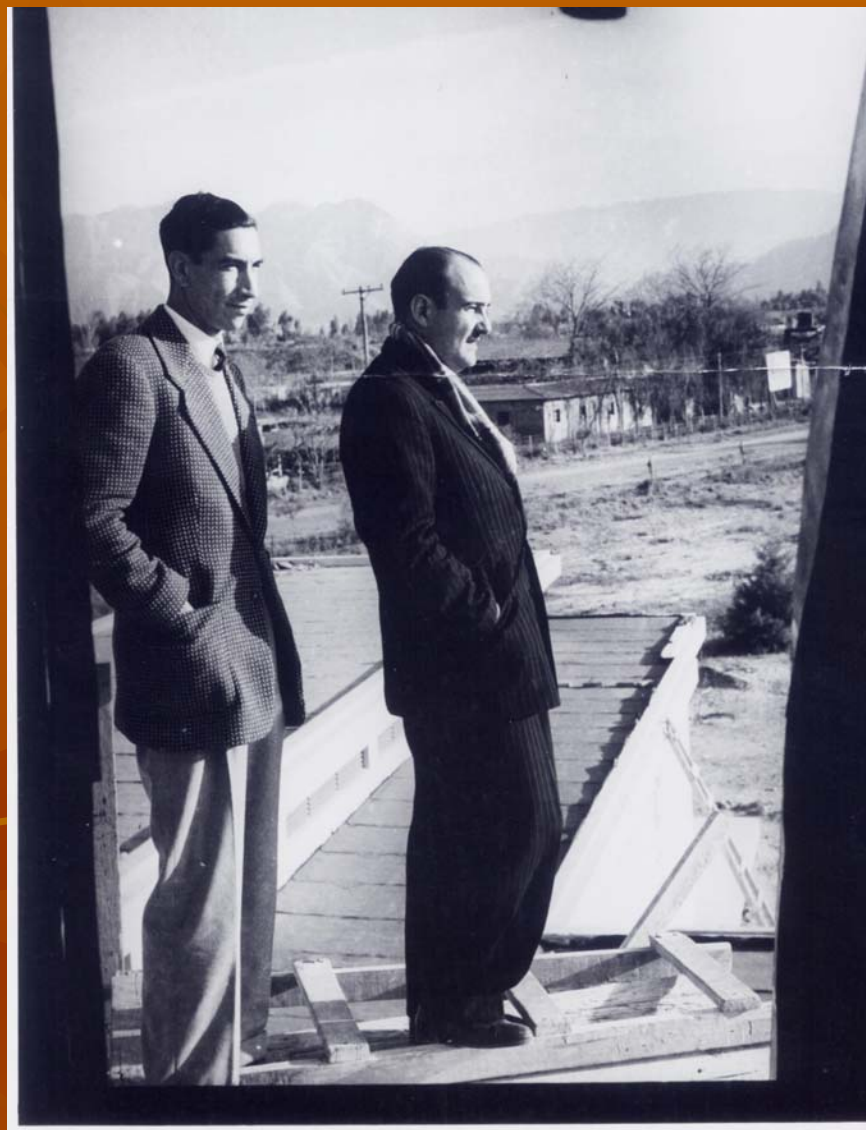
...and last, and more important...

- 1939: Bill van Altena was born.



# **OAFFA's construction**





**José A. López and Miguel Marzo inspecting the construction (March 1953)**





**Social gathering (asado, of course) during OAFA's construction**



**Félix Aguilar Observatory (OAFA) was dedicated on September 28th, 1953**





**OAFA, March 2008**

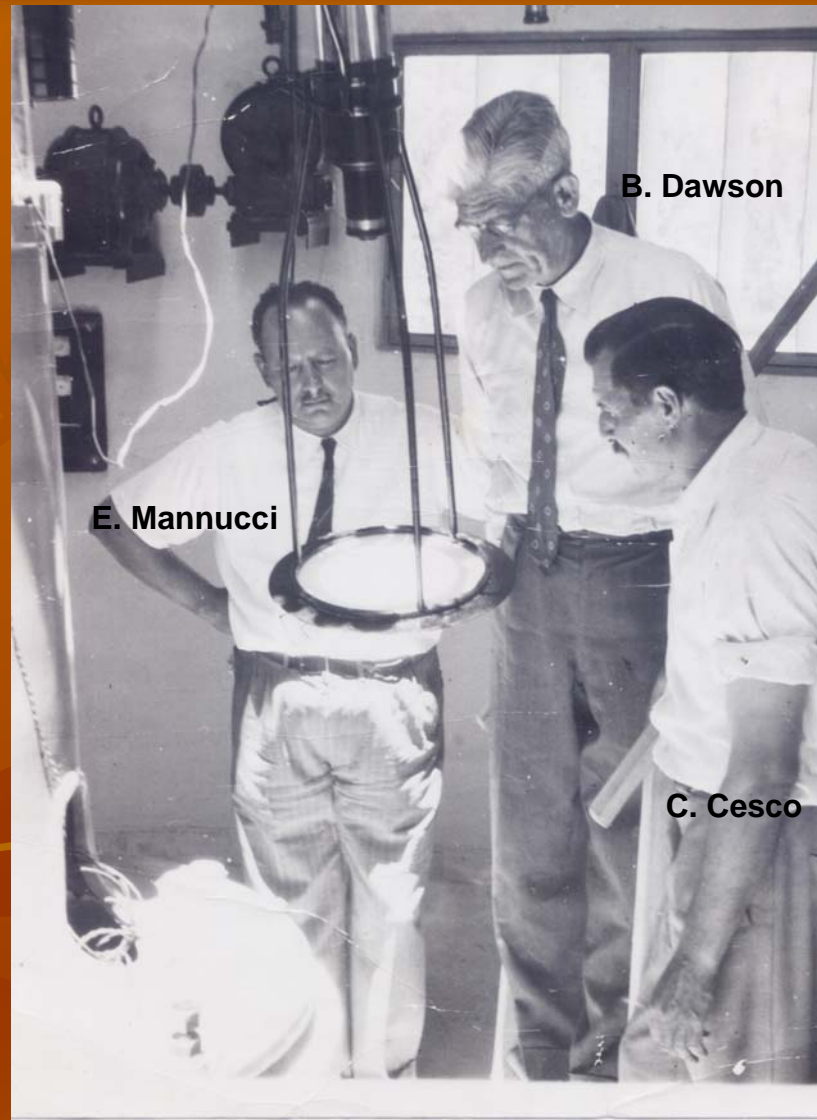


**OAFA's first director was Dr. Carlos U. Cesco**



**Eng. Félix Aguilar**  
**1884 - 1943**



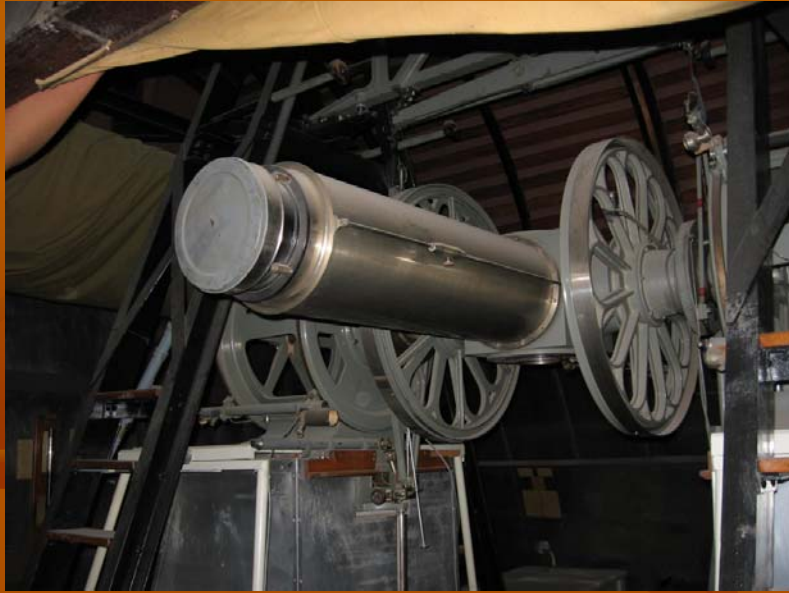


**Observing a solar eclipse (early 1955)**





**The first OAFA's Meridian Circle team (mid 1962)**

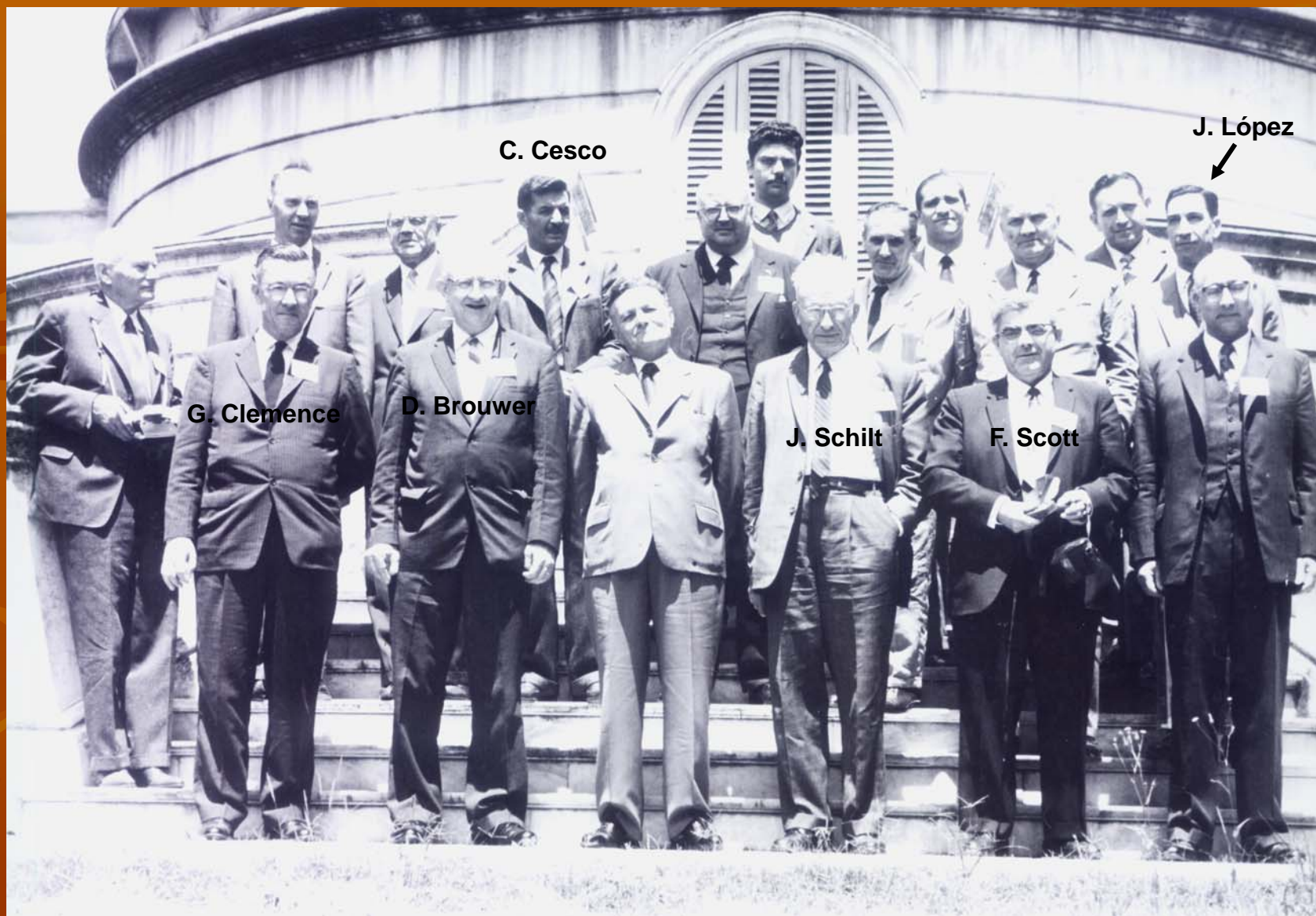


**OAFA's Meridian Circle team  
(by the end of 1988)**





**OAFA's site (Google Earth's view)**



**Astrometry meeting at La Plata Observatory, by the end of 1959**



Los Colorados

El Leoncito



Search Areas for the YCSO



**Left to right: D. Brouwer, C. Cesco, J. Schilt, J. Sanguin, and G. Sánchez  
(Los Colorados, early 1960)**

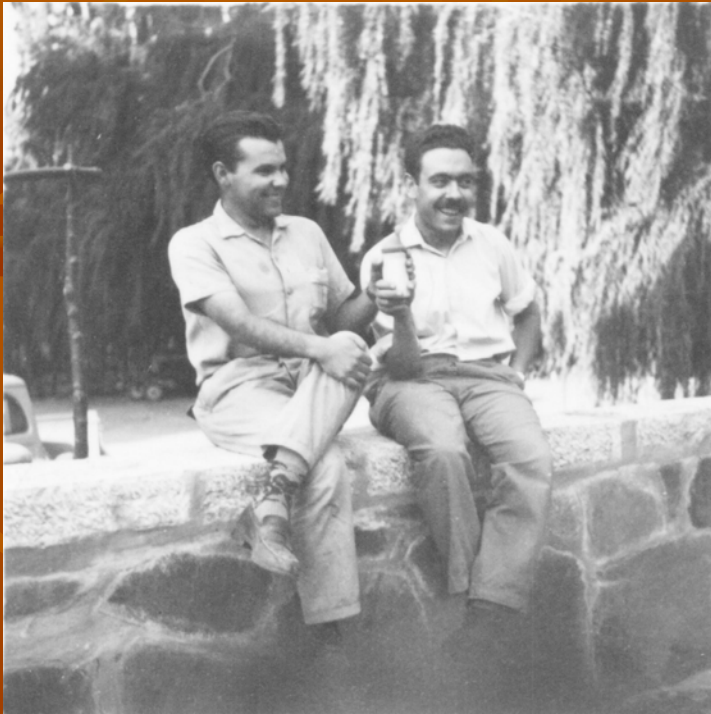




**Left to right: G. Sánchez and J. Sanguin  
(Los Colorados, mid 1960)**



**Celebrating the construction of YCSO (by the end of 1962)**



**G. Sánchez and J. Sanguin  
(El Leoncito, late 1960)**



**G. Sánchez, L. Cabrera, G. Sánchez  
and F. Muñoz  
(El Leoncito, late 1960)**



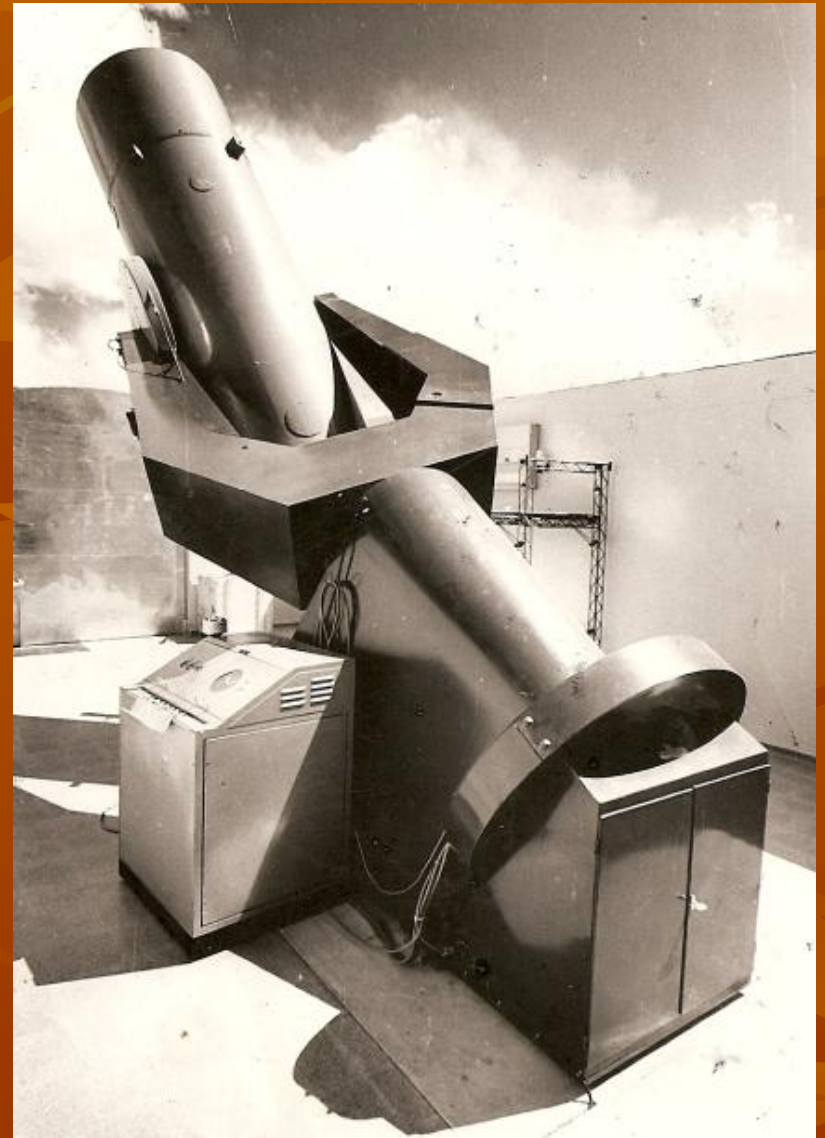


**D. Brouwer, C. Cesco and the Rector of Universidad de Cuyo,  
after signing the first agreement between YCSO and Argentina.  
Mendoza, 1962.**



**The YCSO dedication day: March 31st, 1965**





**The YCSO dedication day: March 31st, 1965**



## Dedication day expenses

"SAISA"  
—

**"SAISA LTDA."**  
CAPITAL: \$ 25,000 000,00  
—

DESAMPARADOS  
TELEF. 5266  
SAN JUAN  
—

**NOTA DE REMITO N° 3147**

Fecha 30 Marzo 1965 **FACTURA**

Nombre OBSERVATORIO AUSTRAL YALE COLUMBIA

Domicilio San Juan

Remitimos la mercadería detallada seguidamente:

CANTIDAD	DESCRIPCION	
15	Kgs. de asado, a \$ 115.- el Kg. ....	\$ 1.725.--

Son: MIL SETECIENTOS VEINTICINCO PESOS m/n.

*[Handwritten signature]*

*[Stamp: PROVINCIA DE SAN JUAN, 3875520, \$ 2.-]*

## Dedication day expenses (cont'd)

ESTABLECIMIENTO DE ASERRADERO  
BODEGA Y VIÑEDOS

Avda. SARMIENTO 92 - DESAMPARADOS  
TELEFONO 3967

Escrit. LAPRIDA 23 oeste - TELEF. 3234  
S A N J U A N

San Juan, Marzo 31 de 1965

 $\alpha$  GUALINO & ESCOLAR

INSCRIP: Edictos No. 155-10  
INSCRIP: Ventas No. 58796-10

Por lo siguiente:

D E B E

# Dedication day expenses (cont'd)

FINCA "EL MOLINO"

TAMBERIAS - CALINGASTA - SAN JUAN

Nº 1368

Remito No. R. San Juan 6 de Abril de 1965.-

Enfardador Señor Abservatorio Austrol- YALE COLUMBIA

Camión Domicilio

A LOS REDITOS  
11.992 - 10  
A LAS VENTAS  
CONTRIBUYENTE

A JOSE PLANA SANCHIS

Por las mercaderías que a continuación se detallan:

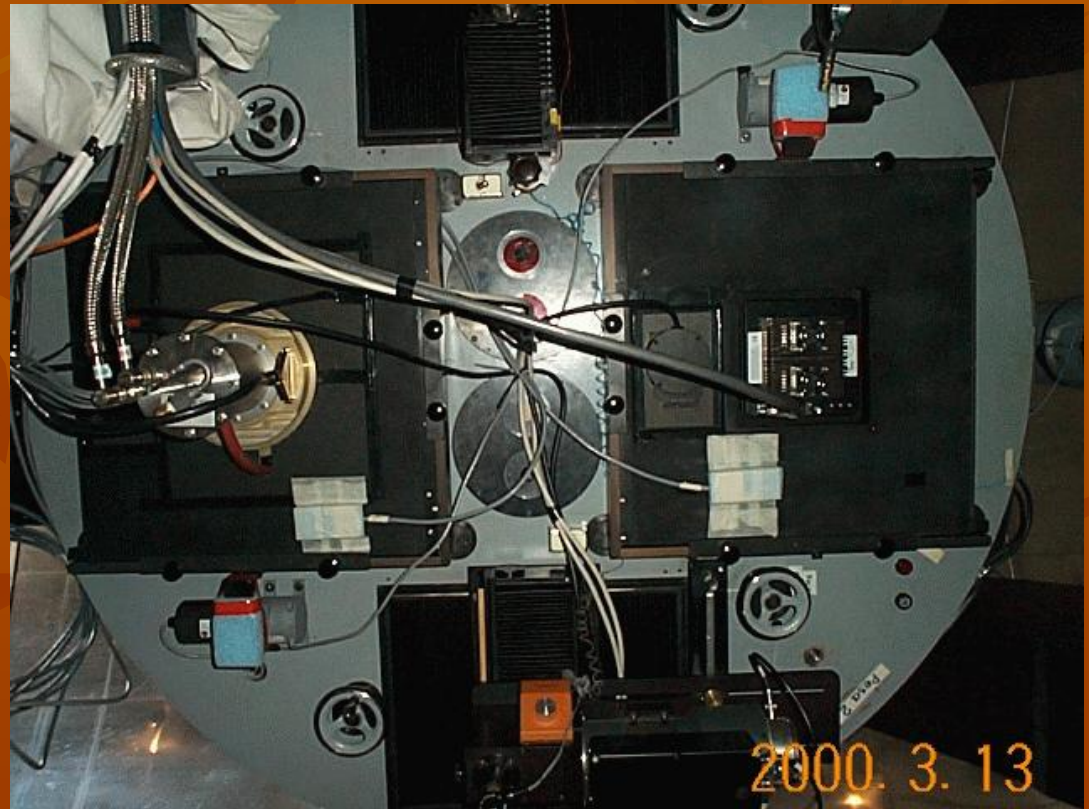
DEBE

Art.	Cant.	DETALLE	PARCIAL	TOTAL
	6	Pavos con un total de 35 kilos.....a	\$180,--\$	6.300,--
				~~~~~
		SON: SEIS MIL TRESCIENTOS PESOS M/N. DE C/LEGAL.-		-----
		Pagado		



**Bill van Altena, Terry Girard, and Arnold Klemola. Giant leap: from photographic plates to CCD. El Leoncito, 2000.**





**The Double Astrograph today**



YSO, entrance gate. August 2008.



# **Dr. Carlos U. Cesco Station**

**(Yale Southern Observatory)**

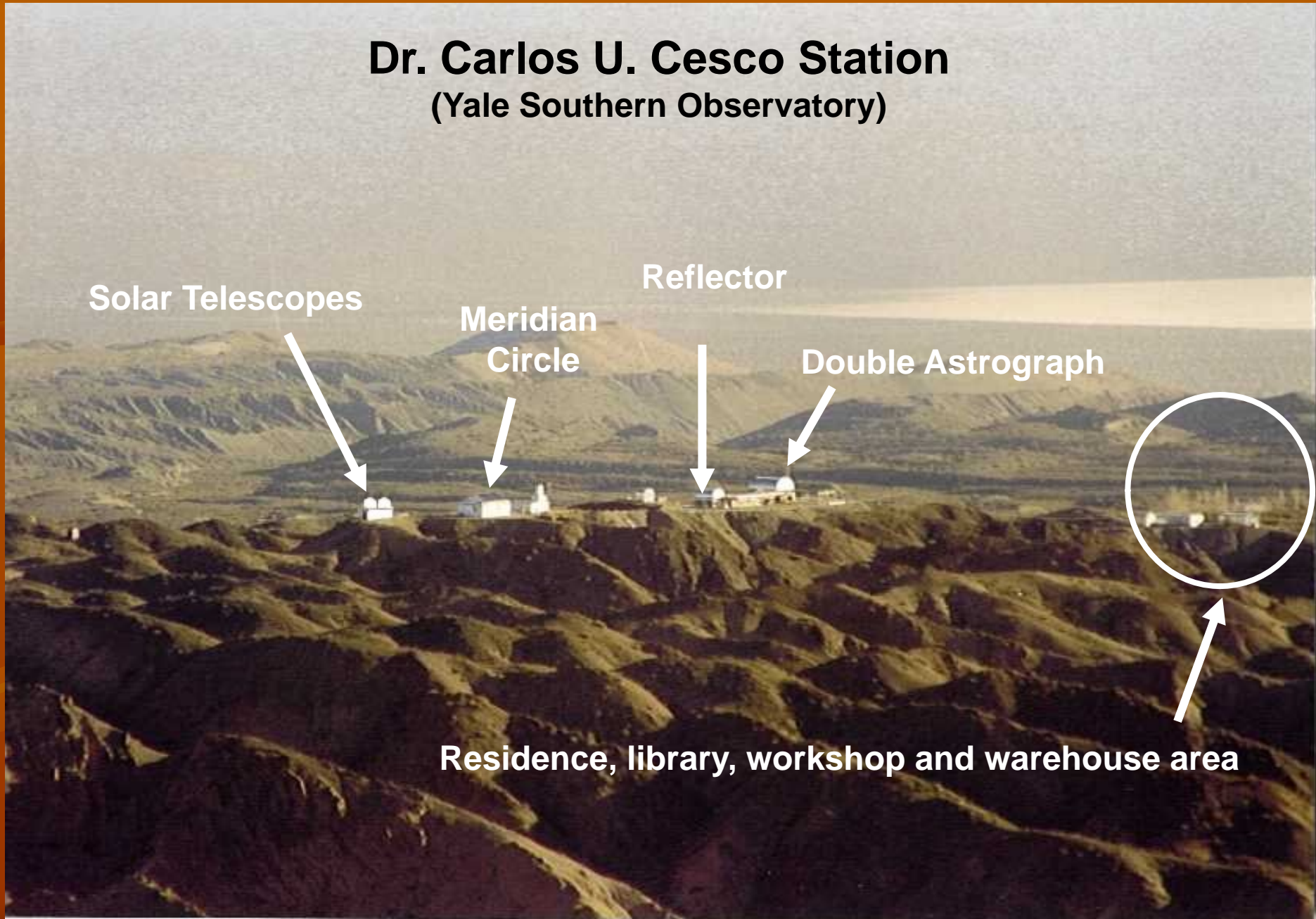
**Solar Telescopes**

**Meridian  
Circle**

**Reflector**

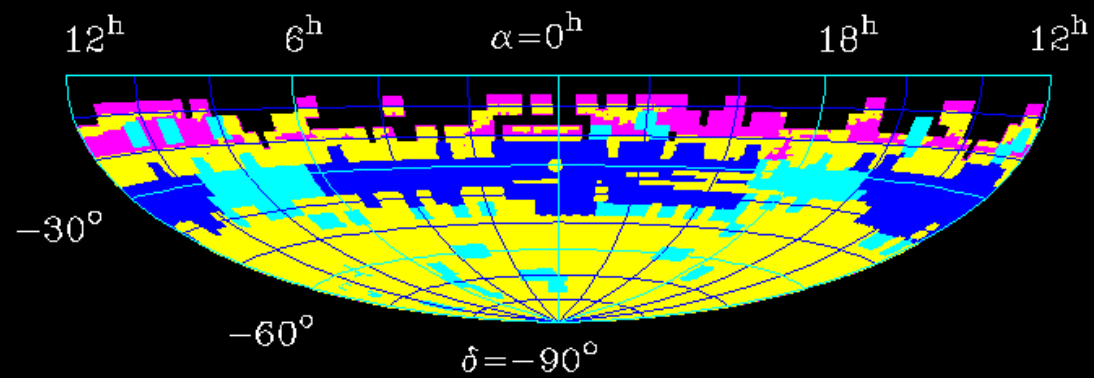
**Double Astrograph**

**Residence, library, workshop and warehouse area**





**Yale Southern Observatory (Google Earth's view)**



1<sup>st</sup> epoch

2<sup>nd</sup> epoch

SPM 3

CCD

**The SPM current status**





**... and finally...**



**Halley's comet. The comet Bill never saw, although he had the chance...  
(he was busy doing something else)**



**Bill and Alicia dancing at the closing dinner of  
ADeLA meeting (Mexico, DF, 2008)**