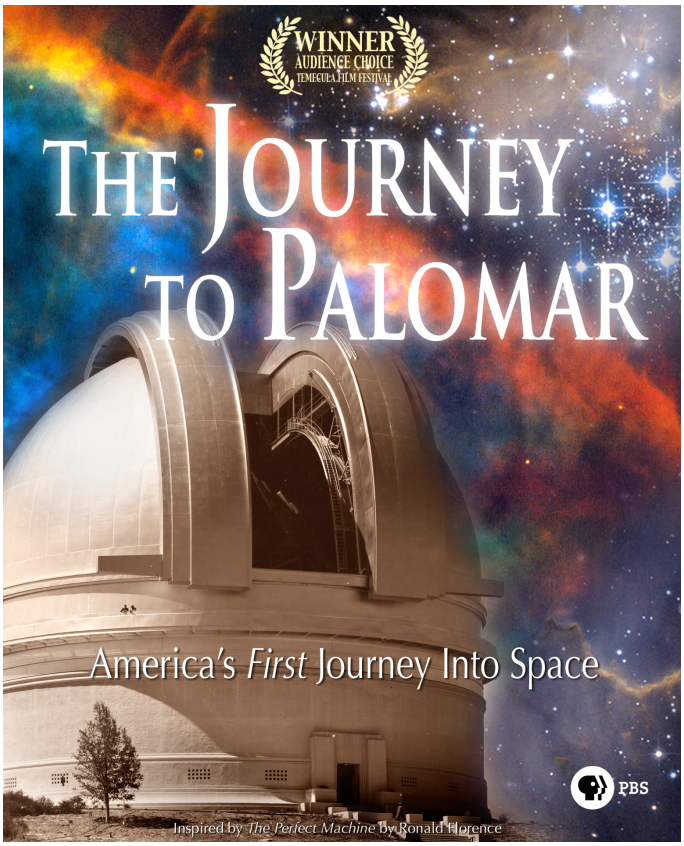
PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Nationwide primetime PBS
television documentary premieres
November 10, 2008

Contacts: Todd Mason or Robin Mason,
film's producers (310) 313-6005
masonproductions@ca.rr.com



Premiere of new primetime PBS documentary on history of famed Palomar Observatory

A new documentary on the epic 20th century story of the birth of American astronomy and the building of the famed Palomar 200-inch telescope will premiere nationwide in primetime on PBS November 10th (check local listings).

Before we went to the Moon, George Ellery Hale took us to the stars. This is the story of America's *first* journey into space. Hale built the biggest telescopes of the 20th century. His great telescopes laid the foundation for today's marvels like the Hubble Space Telescope and tomorrow's 21st century telescopes. Hale's telescopes were each the technical marvels in their day.

The film, entitled *The Journey to Palomar*, is the result of more than five years' work by Los Angeles filmmakers Todd and Robin Mason. It traces the story of Chicago-born astronomer George Ellery Hale, considered the father of astrophysics, as he struggles personally and professionally to build his great telescopes at the Yerkes and Mount Wilson Observatories, and finally the 20-year effort to build the million-pound telescope on Palomar Mountain--considered the "moon shot" of the 1930s and '40s. Hale's observatories revealed the greatest discoveries since Galileo and Copernicus, such as Edwin Hubble's 1929 discovery of the expansion of the universe. More information and the film's trailer can be seen at www.journeytopalomar.org.

Future Telescopes

The film will be available from PBS Home Video simultaneously with the broadcast on November 10th. The home video DVD includes three exclusive special features on America's next generation of giant telescopes: NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, The Carnegie Observatories' Giant Magellan Telescope and Caltech's Thirty-Meter Telescope, all descendants of Hale's telescopes depicted in *The Journey to Palomar*.

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The James Webb Space Telescope. When NASA's Hubble Space Telescope ends its useful life, it will be replaced by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), which will be named in honor of the NASA Administrator who led America's expeditions to the Moon and prepared to explore the outer planets of our solar system. The main mirror of the Webb telescope will be about 21 feet in diameter, two-and-a-half times the diameter of the Hubble's mirror. This telescope will be launched in 2013 and will reside in space a million miles from earth. More on JWST at http://www.jwst.nasa.gov/press.html

The Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) currently being built by The Carnegie Observatories (and partners) will be located on a 9,000-foot peak in Chile to take advantage of the excellent "seeing" there in the smooth, dry air. It is scheduled for completion around 2017. The GMT the GMT's mirror will be composed of seven individual mirrors that will function as one giant mirror, 80 feet in diameter. More on GMT at http://www.gmto.org/. Or contact Arnie Phifer (626) 304-0270 or phifer@ociw.edu

The Thirty-Meter Telescope (TMT) currently planned by Caltech (and partners) will be located on a high mountaintop in Hawaii or Chile. It will have an even larger mirror. 492 segments will form a mirror surface 30 meters--or about 100 feet--in diameter, nearly the width of a football field. TMT is planned for completion in 2016. More on TMT at http://www.tmt.org/. Or contact Charles Blue (626) 395-1639 or cblue@tmt.org

On both GMT and TMT, computers will rapidly adjust the shape of the individual mirror segments to correct for blurriness due to changes in the earth's atmosphere. This technique is called "Adaptive Optics." It will allow these ground-based telescopes to have at least 10 times the resolution of the Hubble Space Telescope. All three of these new telescopes will work together to:

- Search for the first galaxies that formed after the Big Bang.
- Determine how galaxies evolved.
- Observe the formation of stars and planetary systems.
- Look for evidence of life on planets orbiting other stars.

A comprehensive Teacher Guide accompanies the documentary, available for free download from pbs.org. Also accompanying the documentary will be a nationwide live NASA student webcast on October 8th, 2008, featuring the top astronomers from these future telescope projects. For more on the webcast, go to www.journeytopalomar.org after September 15th.

The Journey to Palomar was inspired by author Ronald Florence's 1994 book *The Perfect Machine*. The documentary includes rare archival footage and interviews with America's top scientists and historians. The film took top honors at the 2007 Temecula Valley Film & Music Festival, winning the Audience Choice award for best documentary.

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