



OBSERVATORY
WATCH & RAYMOND



A U.S. Bureau of Standards disclosure that time controls in America were substandard stimulated the Elgin National Watch Company to build an observatory to time its watches by the stars.

"The Elgin National Watch Company, to provide its own accurate time standards announced it would build an astronomical unit to cover this necessity, and the Observatory was the result. In May, 1909 Professor William W. Payne of Goodsell Observatory, at Carlton College, Northfield, Minnesota, was engaged to advise and assist in locating and equipping the Observatory. A permanent building was soon started according to designs made by and supervised by Mr. George Hunter, consulting superintendent, to comply with the require-

ments outlined by Professor Payne."¹

The hill that the Observatory sits on was chosen because of its gravel base which reduced vibrations of the earth.

The Observatory was opened in February, 1910 and Professor Payne was appointed Director. Underground cables were laid between the Observatory and the Watch Factory's Rating Room in order to accurately regulate and time the watches being manufactured at the factory.

In 1933, the Elgin Observatory was sending impulses daily to Chicago to open the Century of Progress World Fair's gates. At the Fair, the Elgin National Watch Company's exhibit contained a replica of the Elgin Observatory. The greatest single event on the Fairgrounds was the turning on of all the outdoor lighting and the nightly ceremony of Arcturus of which the Elgin Observatory was the key player during the duration of the Fair (1933-1934).

In 1959 the company presented the Observatory to the Elgin Public Schools for use by science students.

1. Source: The Elgin Observatory Story, R.S. Neidigh