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Stargazing

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A telescope no longer peeks from that rounded roof, fueling dreams of space travel. But at more than 120 years old, Linfield’s observatory remains one of the most recognizable buildings on campus. It brought the view of distant planets and galaxies to many a student, as well as adults and children in McMinnville who gathered during major celestial events. The late Winthrop Dolan, who served Linfield for 60 years as a professor, interim president, dean of faculty and trustee, also taught astronomy, which seemed to fit perfectly with his fascination with sundials. The observatory was built in 1893-94 at a cost of $2,500 and rested near Pioneer Hall until the 1950s when it was moved to its current location, what was then the south boundary of campus. Now it stands as a sentinel to the Keck Campus. The original six-inch refracting telescope was replaced with a much better reflector telescope with full computer controls. That telescope was used for several years and for several senior theses including one detecting orbital periods of binary stars, according to Bill Mackie ’71, professor of physics. The telescopes are all currently in storage and the observatory now sports a green dome to reflect its current use, housing Linfield’s Office of Sustainability.