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QUARTER CENTURY  
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SKYSCRAPING

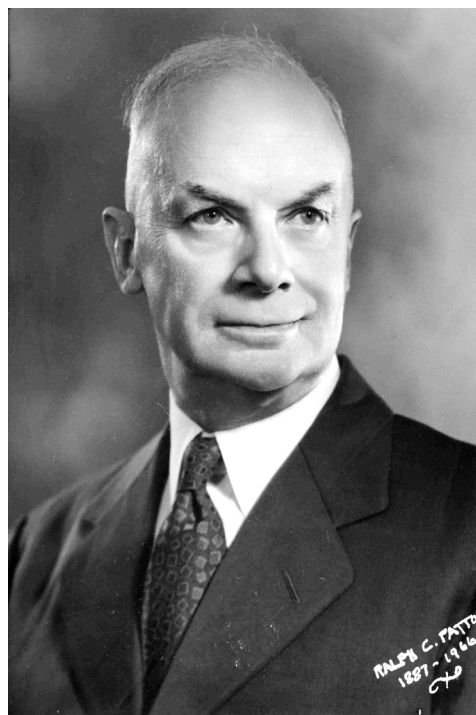
1932 - 1957

*"A stronger faith in living  
and a firmer belief in the Creator  
is instilled by  
the study of the heavens."*

## RALPH CLIFTON PATTON

### President 1956-57

Ralph C Patton was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1887. His father, Dr. George Farrar Patton, was a physician and professor in the graduate medical department of Tulane University and later was head of the Louisiana State Board of Health. His mother was Clara May Simmons who died when her only child was three years old. In Patton's early childhood, his health was poor and he paid little attention to the world of interesting things about him.



When 10 years old, he was one of several hurt when a Mississippi River ferry-boat ran wild and crashed into a floating dock on which passengers were waiting. Rescuers picked him unconscious out of the soft mud of the river bank. Many people who knew him in later years considered this a mistake. The severe blow on the head imparted by the ferry seems to have awakened him to an awareness of the fascinating events occurring outside the family circle.

While recuperating on his grandfather's farm, Patton happened on a copy of "Steele's 14 Weeks Course in Astronomy." From that moment, interest in the farm ceased and nothing seemed quite as important as the starry sky.

After returning to New Orleans, Patton, about 11 years old, made a crude telescope from a piece of discarded organ pipe and two lenses removed from his father's long focus camera, while the father was away on a trip. The little lens taken from the finder of the camera made a fair eyepiece and the rear element of the main lens served as the objective. The drawtube was formed by wrapping a piece of paper, wet with shellac, around a broom stick and removing the latter in the nick of time. The telescope was held loosely to the back of a straight back chair by a carpenter's wood clamp. The observer sat on the floor or squatted down on his haunches, but that is no trouble when you are 11. The instrument was very useful for observing weather vanes and for looking in neighbors' windows as well as for observing the moon, Jupiter's satellites and the Pleiades. The false color effect was beautiful.

The apparent motion of celestial objects across and out of the field proved troublesome, but the principal observer became quite expert at kicking the chair just enough to compensate for the earth's rotation.

Early education was obtained at the "University School," so named in order that the initials "U.S." could be put on the collars and caps of the uniforms. During this period, an experiment with explosives almost cut short the student's career. After growing a new set of fingernails, new skin on face and hands and new hair and eyelashes, the search for knowledge continued.

Four years were spent in the engineering department of Tulane University, during which weighty problems were studied, such as the best way to paint class colors on the tower water tank on a dark night and how to attach a class banner to the top of a smoke stack 125 feet high.

Among the indiscretions of the college period was learning to play the trumpet, or almost learning to play it, in the band.

In order to get a summer job between junior and senior years, Patton passed a civil service examination and emerged as an assistant surveyor on a US government surveying expedition destined to chart the lower reaches of the Mississippi River and neighboring swamps. This work brought Patton into intimate association with government civil engineers, uncivil engineers, bees, wasps, hornets, mosquitoes, alligators, rattlesnakes, moccasins, poison ivy and malaria germs. A great deal was learned that summer,

To the surprise of family and friends, in 1907 Patton was given the degree of BE by Tulane. To their astonishment, he was awarded the master's degree in electrical engineering two years later.

Patton and his buddy could not decide whether to go to work in New Orleans or to try for a job with the General Electric Company in Schenectady, New York. They called on lady luck to decide this for them by tossing a coin. If heads came up three times out of five they would seek their fortune in the East; if tails prevailed, they would stay in the deep South. The momentous toss was made, and heads came up three times straight. Lady luck was sure of herself that day. They bought tickets for New York within the hour, just in case any parent should want them to be reasonable about the matter.

In Schenectady, they worked in the testing and research departments of the General Electric Company. Patton had another close call there in a high voltage flare up, but he escaped only slightly singed.

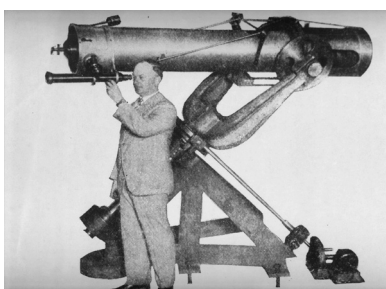
The next position was with the Electrical Testing Laboratories in New York

City, and in 1910 the move was made to Providence, as electrical engineer of the D & W Fuse Company

In 1912, Patton married Miss Carolyn Tillinghast Parker who claims to have captured a rebel single handed. They had one child, Carolyn, in 1915. She is now Mrs. Thurston Steele and has three sons of her own.

Among adult indiscretions should be included taking saxophone lessons. Patton played in amateur groups and on radio station WEAN in duets and sextets with other misguided saxophonists. His other hobbies were sailing and taking colored motion pictures in foreign countries. These pictures he shows in public on the slightest provocation and will lecture with them if given the least encouragement. Watch out for this.

In 1917, Patton, resigned from the D & W Fuse Company and incorporated the Patton-MacGuyer Company with Mr. Herman F MacGuyer.



He designed and largely constructed a 12-inch reflecting telescope in 1929. This equatorially mounted instrument is housed in a sliding roof observatory on the roof of his factory. Before the Cold War, a copy of the Patton telescope was made from his drawings by the Russians and was mounted in a small observatory in Neish Neish Novgorod.



When not making a living or a telescope, or traveling, or sailing, or playing the saxophone, Ralph C Patton used to invent things, a few of which were commercially successful. Patents have been issued to him on a lifting jack, a thermally controlled valve, a viewfinder for cameras, an electric fuse, a wire terminal and a magnetic chuck.

At present, Ralph C Patton is Chairman of the Board of the Patton-MacGuyer Company., Secretary of the General Fittings Company., and Secretary of the Cady Company. He is a director of these companies and of the Electric Terminal Corporation. He has been Senior Warden of a church for twenty-five years, and is a member of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, the Providence Engineering Society, the British Astronomical Association, the AAVSO, the Turks Head Club, the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity, and most important of all, the Skyscrapers.

When asked whether he could summarize his 70 years of life very briefly, he replied "Gee! it has been a lot of fun."