

Walter Sydney Adams Encyclopedia Article

Walter Sydney Adams

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1876-1956

American astronomer who applied spectroscopic techniques in classifying stars and determining stellar motions. Adams established spectroscopic parallax. This method for measuring stellar distances led to his discovery of white dwarfs (1915). In 1925 he provided support for Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity by observing the predicted red-shift in heavy star spectra due to intense gravitational fields. Most of Adams's career was spent at Mount Wilson Observatory, where he served as director from 1923 until 1946.