

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 13, 2005**

## **CHICAGO'S ADLER PLANETARIUM CELEBRATES 75<sup>TH</sup> YEAR AS AMERICA'S FIRST PLANETARIUM**

**Year Long Celebration to Inspire the Next Generation of Explorers**

CHICAGO – On May 12, 1930 – just a few months after Illinosian Clyde Tombaugh discovered Pluto – the Adler Planetarium was dedicated in Chicago and became America's First Planetarium. There had never been anything like it in the Western Hemisphere; and, as the Adler opened its great Art Deco bronze doors, it began a legacy of inspiring visitors to imagine their futures.

Over millennia, human beings have looked to the sky with awe and curiosity. Chicago businessman Max Adler capitalized on humanity's wonder about the Universe in giving the people of Chicago a world-class science museum.

"Today, our understanding of the Universe is very advanced," said Adler President Paul H. Knappenberger Jr., PhD. "Astronomy is among the most active sciences and there are more than 1,500 planetariums in the Western Hemisphere. The Adler continues to champion public understanding of the latest research and space exploration findings."

### **Max Adler – humble beginnings**

Born Manasseh Adler in Elgin, Illinois on May 12, 1866, Max Adler was the fifth of seven children. His parents were German Jewish immigrants who sailed to America around 1850. They opened a clothing store in Elgin and raised their family to value opportunities, pursue dreams, and be generous with success.

Adler worked hard and enjoyed a successful business career. A life-long musician and patron of the arts, he retired in 1928 and began to search for a gift he could bestow on the city. Married to Sophie Rosenwald, sister of Julius Rosenwald, the founder of the Chicago's Museum of Science & Industry, Adler had still not decided when he took the advice of a friend and traveled to Europe to see a new invention, the Zeiss planetarium projector.

On a trip to Jena, Germany, accompanied by his wife and an architect cousin, Ernest Grunsfeld Jr., Adler visited the Zeiss factory where Dr. Walter Bauersfeld developed the original Zeiss projector. The machine was positioned at the exact center of a hemispherical room where it projected images of celestial objects onto the inner surface of a dome.

(more)

## **ADLER 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **PAGE TWO**

Adler marveled at the extreme technology, the opportunity for people to travel in time allowing them to see how the heavens appeared 2000 years ago over ancient Rome, or view the position of the planets and stars at any date in the future. Adler had witnessed humans mastering their own environment on Earth, and now there was no doubt what his contribution was to be. Adler decided he would build the first planetarium in America in his hometown of Chicago!

Plans for the planetarium began on the ship back from Europe with Adler and Grunsfeld designing the now-famous twelve-sided Art Deco building with a rainbow granite façade. Grunsfeld would later receive a Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects for his creation. Located on Northerly Island, the first of Daniel Burnham's planned series of lakefront island parks, Max Adler broke ground in 1929.

The Adler Planetarium opened to much fanfare on Max Adler's 64th birthday, May 12, 1930. Eventually millions of people would flock to the new museum on Northerly Island. Today it is a peninsula and part of Chicago's Museum Campus. Visitors from around the world sat in the Adler's Sky Theater during the 1933-1934 Century of Progress Exposition. Chicago hosted the World's Fair on the lakefront and the Adler Planetarium was the only permanent building on the fairgrounds. At the grand finale of the opening night festivities, a switch from the Adler activated by light from the star *Arcturus*, set the fair aglow. Astronomers chose *Arcturus* because the impulse from this star began its travel to Earth 40 years earlier as Chicago was hosting the World's Columbian Exposition (1893).

### **A Great Museum Needs a Great Collection**

Max Adler made another gift to the people of Chicago when he purchased the A.W. Mensing Collection of antique scientific instruments. This acquisition enabled the new museum to chronicle and share the history of scientific thought and explore the intersection of culture and science. Today, the Adler Collection is four times its original size and features breathtaking instruments, works on paper and rare books. It is one of the three greatest collections of its kind in the world.

### **Scientific Innovation and New Thought**

Overnight, the Adler Planetarium became a leader in astronomy and science education. In addition to being America's First Planetarium, the Adler was the first science museum in the world to recruit a woman to be its director. Maude Bennot directed the Adler Planetarium from 1937 to 1945. Today, the Adler is a leader in promoting science opportunities for women and minorities. Annually, the Women's Board of the Adler Planetarium recognizes the contributions of women as leaders in space science and raises money to help the Adler offer innovative new programs. In 2004, the Adler developed a historic partnership with the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum called *Under One Sky / Bajo Un Mismo Cielo* to create cultural connections and advance science opportunities for Chicago's expanding latino community.

(more)

## **ADLER 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **PAGE THREE**

In 1964, the Adler initiated an intensive science learning experience for accelerated high school students in Chicago. The Astro-Science Workshop – now in its 41<sup>st</sup> year – was among the nation’s first programs for gifted students and received early and sustained support from the National Science Foundation.

#### **Recent Innovation**

The Adler has seen numerous changes and expansions since Mayor Richard J. Daley uncoupled it from the Chicago Park District in the early 1970’s. The underground Astro-Science Center and Kroc Universe Theater were completed in 1973; today, underground space is used for museum administration and all public space is above ground. The Ralph E. Doane Observatory was opened in 1977; it is the largest public urban observatory in the country. In 1979, on the anniversary of the first Moon landing, Apollo 15 astronaut David R. Scott helped the Adler open a new exhibit about the Moon in the museum’s Hall of Space Exploration. A year after NASA’s Hubble Telescope was launched, a \$5 million renovation created the Adler’s famous “Stairway to the Stars” escalator, which links the Kroc Universe Theater and the historic Sky Theater.

In 1992, after the retirement of Dr. Joseph Chamberlain, Adler’s longest-serving director, the Adler recruited a new president, Dr. Paul H. Knappenberger Jr. He led a strategic planning process that eventually developed the Adler’s most ambitious renovation to date, the Dirk Lohan-designed Sky Pavilion. Mayor Richard M. Daley broke ground in 1997 and the new facility was opened in 1999. It added 60,000 square feet of exhibition space across nine new visitor galleries, new café and museum shop facilities and the world’s first all-digital projection planetarium theater. The Adler is the only museum in the world to feature two full-size planetarium theaters.

The new Adler facility also includes a broadcast center and computer classroom, which have made the Adler Planetarium a national leader in producing original science education programs for real-time broadcast to schools. Through its *Astronomy Connections* program, the Adler invests in teacher quality and technology-enabled learning for a new generation of school children.

In 2005, the Adler was selected as NASA’s education and outreach partner for a new mission that will study the interstellar boundary of our solar system. The \$2 million contract will help produce a planetarium show, teacher materials, web site information and special outreach for handicapped students.

(more)

**ADLER 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT**  
**PAGE FOUR**

The Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum – America’s First Planetarium – was founded in 1930 by Chicago business leader Max Adler. Celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2005, the Adler promotes leading edge research in astronomy and its fascinating history. The museum is home to one of the world’s most important antique instrument collections and is the only museum in the world with two full-size planetarium theaters, including the world’s first StarRider Theater. The Adler is also a recognized leader in science education, with a focus on inspiring young people, particularly women and minorities, to pursue careers in science.

On May 12, 2005, the Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum will mark its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by launching a year of celebration and a new direction for the future. A new mission will expand the museum’s current focus on astronomy to celebrate human space exploration and America’s space heroes. Through this new vision, the Adler will help inspire the next generation of explorers.

The Adler Planetarium is located at 1300 South Lake Shore Drive in Chicago and is open every day except for Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. For more information, call 312.922.STAR, or visit our website at [www.adlerplanetarium.org](http://www.adlerplanetarium.org)

###