

Astronomer Biographies

Oral Histories of Women Astronomers

Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin¹

- **Born:** Wendover, United Kingdom, 1900.
- **Education:** Newnham College of Cambridge University. PhD in astronomy from Radcliffe (the affiliated women's college at Harvard University).
- **Research/Discoveries:** extensive study of variable stars, over 150 scientific papers, and several astronomy textbooks.
- **Positions/Accomplishments:** Harvard Observatory astronomer, chairman of Harvard's Department of Astronomy.

Dorrit Hoffleit²

- **Born:** Florence, Alabama, 1907.
- **Education:** MA, PhD from Radcliffe College at Harvard University.
- **Research/Discoveries:** luminosity and spectroscopy of stars
- **Positions/Accomplishments:** Army and Navy ballistic trajectory specialist, Harvard Observatory astronomer, research astronomer at Yale, Director of the Maria Mitchell Observatory.

Henrietta Hill Swope³

- **Born:** 1902
- **Education:** AB from Columbia University, AM from Radcliffe College in 1928.
- **Research/Discoveries:** helped establish the period-luminosity relationship for variable stars, which allowed astronomers to determine the Sun's place in the Galaxy. Also determined distance to Andromeda Galaxy.
- **Positions/Accomplishments:** astronomer at Harvard Observatory, Navy mathematician, Barnard College astronomy professor, research fellow at Mount Wilson Observatory.

¹ Elske V. P. Smith, "Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin," *Physics Today* 33 no. 6 (1980): 64-65. Doi: [10.1063/1.2914128](https://doi.org/10.1063/1.2914128).

² Virginia Trimble, "E. Dorrit Hoffleit, 1907-2007" *Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society* 39 (2007): 1067-1069. Doi: [BAASOBIT2007015](https://doi.org/10.1086/3007015).

³ "Henrietta H. Swope," *Physics Today* 34 no. 3 (1981): 88. Doi: [10.1063/1.2914495](https://doi.org/10.1063/1.2914495).

Jocelyn Bell Burnell⁴

- **Born:** Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1943.
- **Education:** BS from University of Glasgow in 1965, PhD from Cambridge University in 1968.
- **Research/Discoveries:** radio astronomy, monitoring quasars. Helped discover pulsars, but did not receive recognition in the Nobel Prize that her peers were awarded.
- **Positions/Accomplishments:** Astronomy Professor at the University of Southampton, University College of London and Open University. Dean of Science at the University of Bath. President of the Royal Astronomical Society, the Institute of Physics, and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Vera Rubin⁵

- **Born:** 1928
- **Education:** Vassar College, Cornell University, and PhD from Georgetown University
- **Research/Discoveries:** motions of gas and stars within galaxies, and the rotation and motion of galaxies within the universe, which predated the discovery of dark matter.
- **Positions/Accomplishments:** astronomical researcher at Georgetown, Senior Fellow at the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism at the Carnegie Institution of Washington. National Medal of Science winner in 1993, as well as the Gold Medal from the Royal Astronomical Society.

⁴ Biography.com Editors, "Jocelyn Bell Burnell Biography," last updated July 25, 2016. <http://www.biography.com/people/jocelyn-bell-burnell-9206018>.

⁵ "The American Association of Physics Teachers: Richtmyer Memorial Award for 2008—Vera Rubin," *American Journal of Physics* 76 (2008): 894. Doi: [10.1119/1.2956975](https://doi.org/10.1119/1.2956975).