

GP 1: Conference Opening

Zeit: Montag 13:00–14:00

Raum: HS 9

GP 1.1 Mo 13:00 HS 9

Opening and Welcoming — ●CHRISTIAN FORSTNER¹ and ARIANNA BORRELLI² — ¹Goethe University Frankfurt am Main — ²Leuphana University Lüneburg

Welcoming address and conference overview

GP 1.2 Mo 13:15 HS 9

Hauptvortrag
Tracing the origins of physics on the Canadian Prairies: Skills, materials, and instruments on the move. — ●DAVID PANTALONY — Ingenium: Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation, P.O. Box 9724, Station T, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Outside of Canada, the province of Saskatchewan is not a well-known place, and yet it has a surprisingly rich history of physics. During the post-World War II period, the Department of Physics at the University of Saskatchewan was a leader in spectroscopy, plasma physics, nuclear

physics, space and atmospheric science and medical physics. How did this come to be in a province that began the twentieth century as an agrarian territory? In this paper, I look at the origins of physics in this Prairie province. In particular, I study the surviving historic instruments to explore experimental and teaching traditions, a mixture of influences from Germany and Britain, as well as diverse, local precision-making cultures. Several of the instruments also reveal strong intellectual and material connections to the American Midwest (Chicago and Milwaukee). These developments in Saskatchewan physics were part of a broader emergence of a confident modernist spirit in government, the arts and sciences. By studying these historic instruments, we can enrich and challenge these broader narratives. Furthermore, the unusual context of these instrument histories, seemingly remote from the traditional cosmopolitan knowledge centres, brings to light formative material and social exchanges that are often taken for granted by scientists and historians.