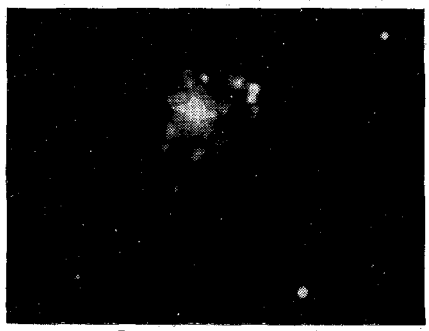
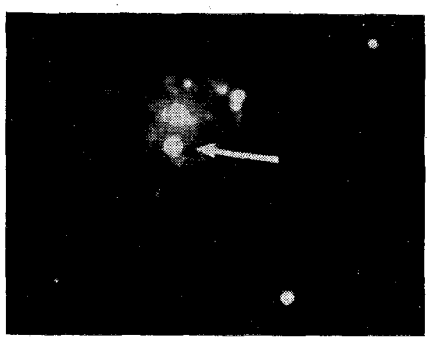


48-inch Schmidt photo of spiral galaxy NGC 5668, taken in 1952.



48-inch photo taken this month shows stellar explosion.

200-inch photo of NGC 5668, taken the day after Wild made his discovery, gives clear view of supernova, or stellar explosion.

STELLAR EXPLOSION

Researcher in astrophysics discovers a supernova — a bright star burning 100 million times brighter than the sun

A TITANIC STELLAR EXPLOSION that occurred eons before primitive man first noticed the stars has been discovered by a Caltech research assistant in astrophysics. Only now are its effects available for studies that add to our knowledge of the world we live in.

The explosion was first recorded photographically last month by Paul Wild, working with the 18-inch Schmidt telescope at the Palomar Observatory. It took place in the spiral galaxy known as NGC 5668, and produced what astronomers call a "supernova," an exceptionally bright star that Wild found in an area where none had been observed before.

A number of studies was launched immediately, because supernovae usually fade out not long after they burst forth. One of the studies was the 200-inch Hale telescope photograph shown above. Spectrographic studies by astronomer Milton L. Humason show that NGC 5668 apparently is hurtling away from us at a speed of roughly 1000 miles a second. It is now roughly 20 million light years away. It has, therefore, taken this long for the light to arrive to tell us that something had happened in NGC 5668—something that made a hitherto unseen star burn a hundred million times brighter than our sun.

This is not the most brilliant supernova known. Astronomers Fritz Zwicky and Josef J. Johnson observed several brighter ones during a systematic search from 1936 to 1941. However, more information may be derived from the "new" supernova than from previous ones by studying it with the 200-inch telescope.