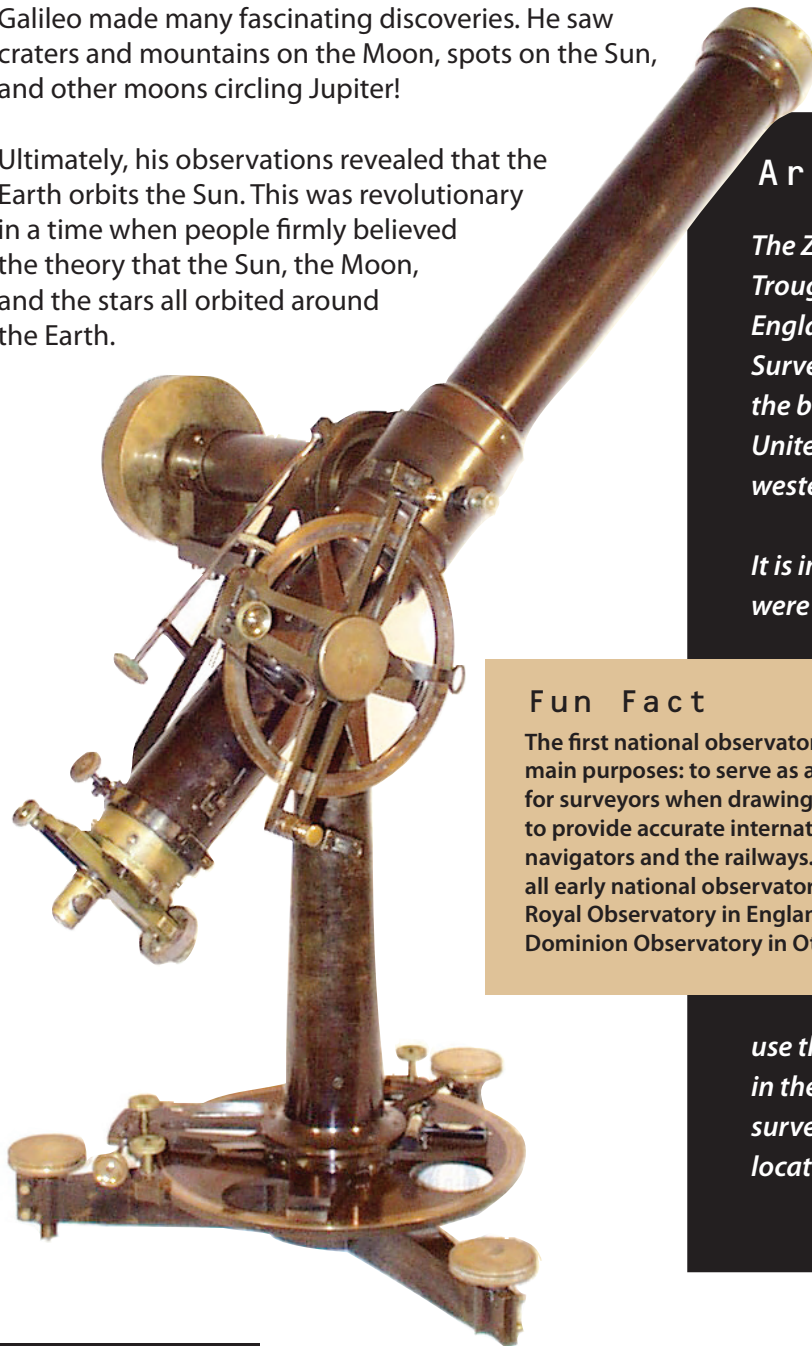


Zenith Telescope

Background Information

The beginning of modern astronomy is often linked to Galileo building his first telescope in 1609 — roughly 400 years ago. While he was not the first person to use a telescope, Galileo made many fascinating discoveries. He saw craters and mountains on the Moon, spots on the Sun, and other moons circling Jupiter!

Ultimately, his observations revealed that the Earth orbits the Sun. This was revolutionary in a time when people firmly believed the theory that the Sun, the Moon, and the stars all orbited around the Earth.



Artifact Details

The Zenith telescope was built by the Troughton & Simms Company in London, England. It dates from about 1872. Surveyors used the Zenith telescope to mark the boundary between Canada and the United States along the 49th parallel in western Canada.

It is important to note that these surveyors were not interested in studying the stars themselves. Astronomy has very practical uses for surveyors and navigators. The position of stars in the sky, and the distance between each star, can be precisely measured. Surveyors and navigators can

use the stars to measure distances anywhere in the world. Measuring the position of stars, surveyors used this telescope to determine the location of the 49th parallel.

Fun Fact

The first national observatories had two main purposes: to serve as a starting point for surveyors when drawing maps, and to provide accurate international time for navigators and the railways. This is true of all early national observatories, from the Royal Observatory in England, to Canada's Dominion Observatory in Ottawa.

© 2009 Canada Science and Technology Museum Corporation
This publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational uses.