

# Hans Lippershey Biography

## Hans Lippershey

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# Biography

Although there is some debate, most historians agree that Hans Lippershey was the first inventor of the **telescope**. Born in Wesel (Germany), Lippershey migrated to Zeeland in the Netherlands. Little is known about Lippershey except that he married in 1594 and officially became a citizen of his adopted country in 1602.

According to a popular story, Lippershey, an eyeglass maker, came up with the idea for the telescope after watching two children in his eyeglass shop play with his **lenses**. The legend holds that children grasping two lenses and, looking through both simultaneously, noticed that a **weather** vane on a nearby church steeple seemed to appear larger and clearer than visible by normal sight. Lippershey realized the potential of this accidental discovery and proceeded to make a telescope by attaching lenses at the two ends of a tube.

Lippershey applied for a patent in 1608, but the device could not be kept a secret and the patent was eventually denied. Others came forth claiming to have invented the new device, including Jacob Metius and Sacharias Janssen, both of the Netherlands. Still, Lippershey's application for a patent remains the earliest record of a telescope, which he called a *kijker*, or "looker." Lippershey also benefited financially from his invention through the Dutch government, which paid him to construct several telescopes for military use.