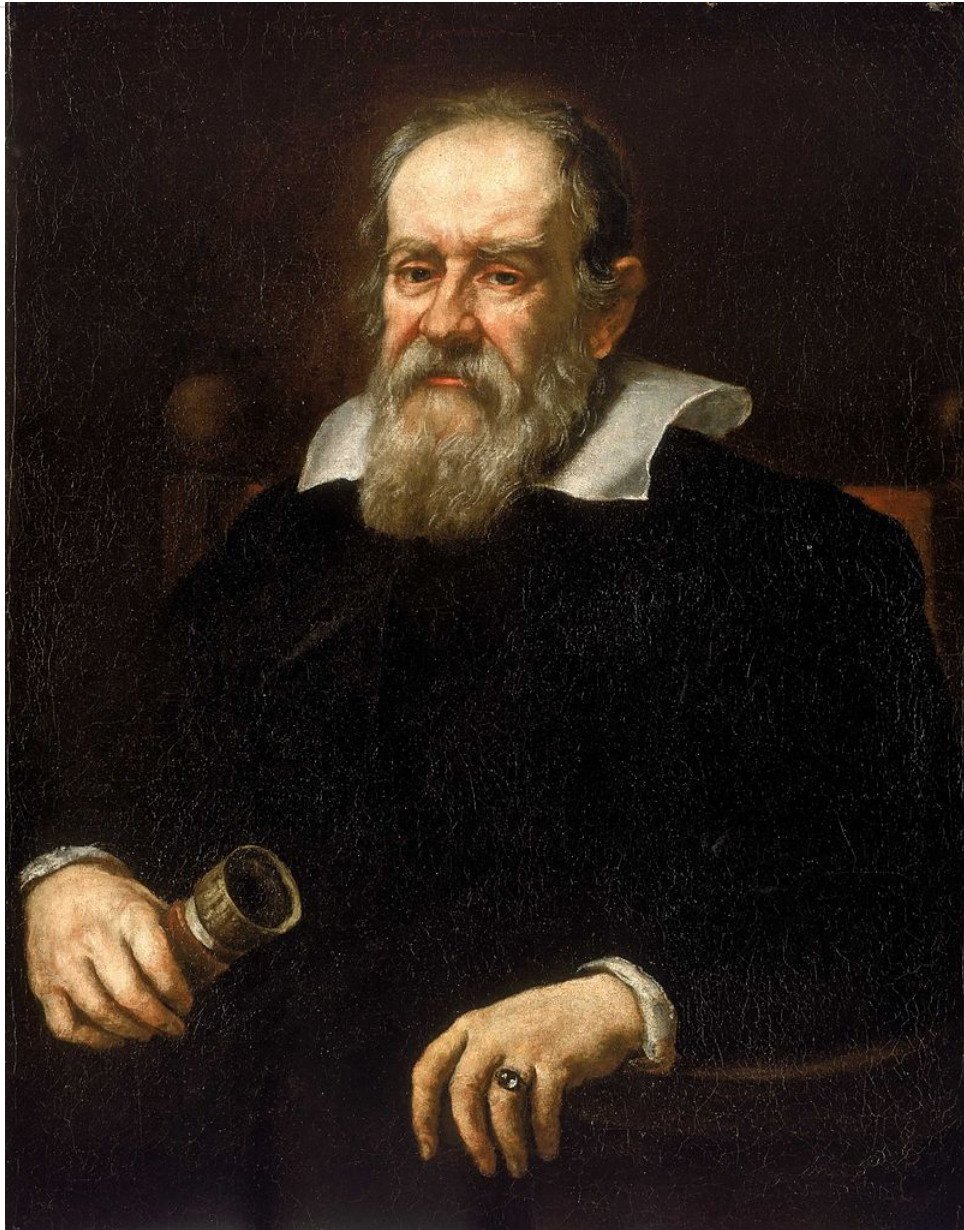


5.3: Early Telescopes



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Jan (or Han) **Lipperhey** of Holland, a spectacle maker, is given credit for inventing the first telescope in 1608 — a **refracting telescope**. He called his telescope **Kijker**, meaning “looker” in Dutch. Lipperhey’s telescope was a refracting or lens-type telescope — as were all early telescopes; this used a convex lens to focus incoming light. Lipperhey thought the telescope’s best use was *military*.

Lipperhey unsuccessfully tried to patent the telescope, as well as telescope binoculars. Since Lipperhey was denied a patent — probably meaning he did not invent the telescope — who did invent the telescope? Rumor has it Lipperhey’s son actually discovered the correct lens combination — *he put together two lenses and “spied” a local church steeple*. Some historians argue that Lipperhey stole the idea from **Hans and Zacharias Janssen**, other spectacle makers, who supposedly built a telescope in 1595. However, historical references are not as clear on the Janssens and their telescope.

The first to use the telescope astronomically was **Galileo Galilei**. Galileo made his first telescope in 1609, based on what he had heard about the Lipperhey telescope. However Galileo’s telescope was of much-better quality than Lipperhey’s telescope.

“...[But] perhaps his [Galeleo] most famous invention was the telescope. Galileo made his first telescope in 1609, modeled after telescopes produced in other parts of Europe that could magnify objects three times. He created a telescope later that same year that could magnify objects twenty times. With this telescope, he was able to look at the moon, discover the four satellites of Jupiter, observe a supernova, verify the phases of Venue, and discover sunspots. His discoveries proved the Copernican system which states that the earth and other planets revolve around the sun. Prior to the Copernican system, it was held that the universe was geocentric, meaning the sun revolved around the earth”

— *The Galileo Project (1564-1642)*

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