

“An excellent apparatus”

“Connected with this school is an excellent apparatus, including a telescope, which we understand to be among the largest in the State; this, however, is owned by the Principal, Mr. J. M. Ross.”

– “Town of Smithfield.” *Twenty-First Annual Report on Public Schools*, January 1866.

ACHROMATIC TELESCOPES,

OF ANY SIZE,

OR PLAIN

MADE BY

237 Fifth St.,



WITH EQUATORIAL

MOUNTING.

HENRY FITZ,

New-York.

Prof. Loomis, in his late work “On the Progress of Astronomy,” says:

“The principal manufacturer of Refracting Telescopes in this country is Mr. Henry Fitz, of New-York City.

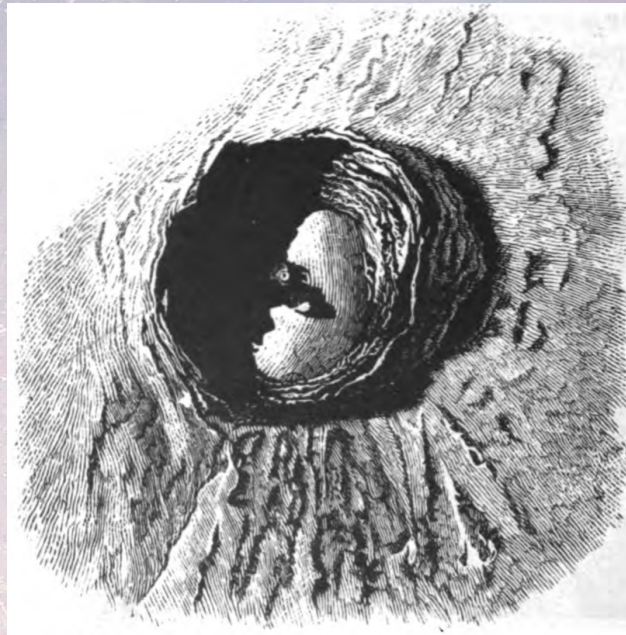
“Several of these instruments have been subjected to a very thorough trial before they were purchased. The instrument for the Chilean expedition was procured under the following circumstances:—Mr. Fitz volunteered to make an object glass from Guinand’s discs, of the same dimensions as that of the High School Observatory in Philadelphia, which should be compared with that instrument, and if pronounced equal to it, he should charge for it only the cost of a similar lens at Munich. In May, 1849, Professor Kendall, of the High School Observatory, made trial of the Fitz object glass upon the moon, Jupiter, and several double stars, and after careful comparison with his Fraunhofer, declared himself unable to pronounce which was the better glass. Several other competent judges assisted at the trial, and concurred with Professor Kendall in his opinion. The glass was therefore purchased by the government, according to the contract. Lieut. Gillis, after thorough trial, pronounced this telescope perfectly satisfactory, and says that it readily shows the sixth star in the trapezium of Orion, and the daily variations in the colored portion of Mars.”

LIST OF PRICES.

3 in. aperture, 3½ ft. focus, plain stand,	\$100	Equatorial extra,	\$200
4 “ “ 5 “ “ “	200	“ “ “	400
5 “ “ 7 “ “ “	350	“ “ “	“
6 “ “ 8 “ “ “	600	“ “ “	“
8 “ “ 10 “ “ “	1200	“ “ “	900

H. F. has received the First Premium at the four last Exhibitions of the American Institute.

Object Glasses fitted and all repairing done at short notice.

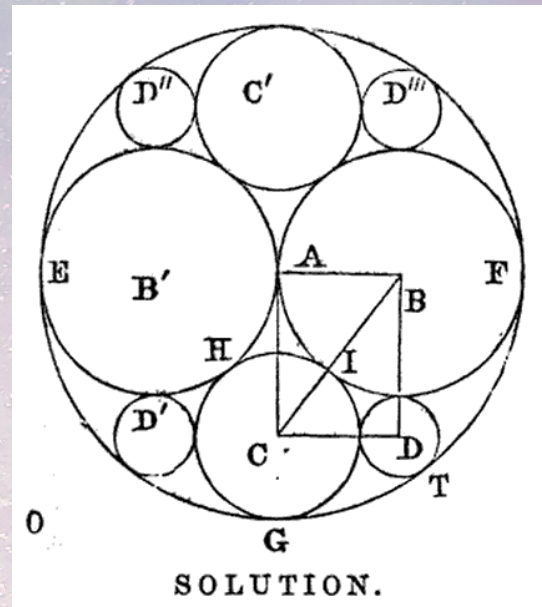


The School Committee of the Town of Smithfield submitted a report to the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island for the school year ending May 1, 1865. One of the challenges conveyed was poor attendance by pupils "... who were suffered to be roaming the streets and fields, when they should have been at school."

The Committee highlights the success of the school at Lonsdale, the only high school in the town at the time. The principal is praised for his work and it is mentioned that he lends his own personal telescope for use by the students. The school is seen as a model that other school districts should emulate. The school had been established in January 1858, with Ross serving as principal since it opened. There were 123 students by 1869.

Ross's telescope was made by Henry Fitz of New York. In the 1850s it would have cost about \$200; this is equivalent to an \$8,000 purchase today. It was described in *The R.I. Schoolmaster* as "six feet in length, with a four and a half inch object glass, and magnifies from 36 to 288 times." The *Schoolmaster* article continues: "It throws light upon the remark recently made to us by one who has visited within the last few years many hundred schools in different States, that he had *nowhere* else seen schools *so well taught* as within a circuit of twenty miles from Providence." [emphasis in the original]

During this era the Town of Smithfield included the present-day towns of North Smithfield, Lincoln, and Central Falls. North Smithfield and Lincoln became independent towns in 1871 after a period of rapid growth. Central Falls separated from Lincoln in 1895. The growth of these communities was in large part due to the economic prosperity of the textile mills along the Blackstone River.



“The ‘Lonsdale Manufacturing Company’ contributes not less than \$1400 yearly for the support of the schools in that village; thus giving an example of the liberality of men who appreciate the advantages of a good education, and feel the importance of giving these advantages to the children of the parents in their employ. The character and the stability of our free institutions, depend upon the correct moral principles taught, and the vigorous intellectual training of the youth in our common schools.

“Blind passion, disloyalty, assassination, and kindred crimes, are the result of ignorance, as is exemplified in our present history as a nation.

“Let the great lessons taught during the past few years stimulate us to greater activity in our endeavors to bring the means of a thorough education within the grasp of all classes and conditions of people. To this end we earnestly solicit all the people of the town to work together more earnestly and zealously for the prosperity of the schools,—demolish the miserable houses in which some of the schools are now held, and erect in some inviting place a neat and commodious school house, and surround it by shade trees and other objects of attraction and interest.

“Visit the school; acquaint yourselves with its doings; appoint the best qualified men for officers,—without allowing neighborhood difficulties and prejudices, or political differences to influence you; give your heartiest support and sympathy to the faithful teachers, and you may look with certainty for still greater benefits.”

The language in the report echoes the philosophy of Horace Mann, Brown University class of 1819 and the first Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education.

“Forts, arsenals, garrisons, armies, navies, are means of security and defence, which were invented in half-civilized times and in feudal or despotic countries; but schoolhouses are the republican line of fortifications, and if they are dismantled and dilapidated, ignorance and vice will pour in their legions through every breach.”

– Horace Mann, Fourth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education. The Common School Journal, January 13, 1841.

– Michael L. Umbricht

