

Early Solar Photography at Vilnius Observatory

The Surviving Dallmeyer Photoheliograph Images



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A Forgotten Chapter in Solar Photography

Did you know that, in an age when the Sun is monitored daily, some of the earliest solar images were taken in the Baltic countries? More than 150 years ago, a cutting-edge instrument of its time was installed at the Observatory of Vilnius University: one of the world's earliest photoheliographs. With it, Vilnius astronomers became pioneers in solar physics, capturing images of the Sun when astrophotography was still in its infancy. What followed was a story worthy of a film, one that ended in tragedy. The devastating fire of 1876 destroyed the instrument and prevented Vilnius from continuing to lead in this field. Yet part of its legacy survived. Through looting, fires, and wars, 283 solar images, some of them unique, were treasured and passed down from one generation of astronomers to the next. A recent study brings this forgotten chapter back to light in the latest issue of the *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*. Discover this fascinating story here:

<https://www.sciengine.com/JAHH/doi/10.3724/SP.J.1440-2807.2026.01.03>



Figure 1: Vilnius Observatory in summer 1875

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1869	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	10	2	0	0	0	18
1870	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
1871	0	0	6	0	2	8	26	18	0	0	0	0	60
1872	0	0	0	0	5	7	6	2	2	2	0	0	24
1873	4	9	5	0	0	0	16	14	10	15	0	7	80
1874	2	6	10	9	10	12	14	7	5	6	2	1	95
Total	6	15	21	9	17	33	68	51	19	23	2	8	283

Table 1: Surviving solar photographs per year

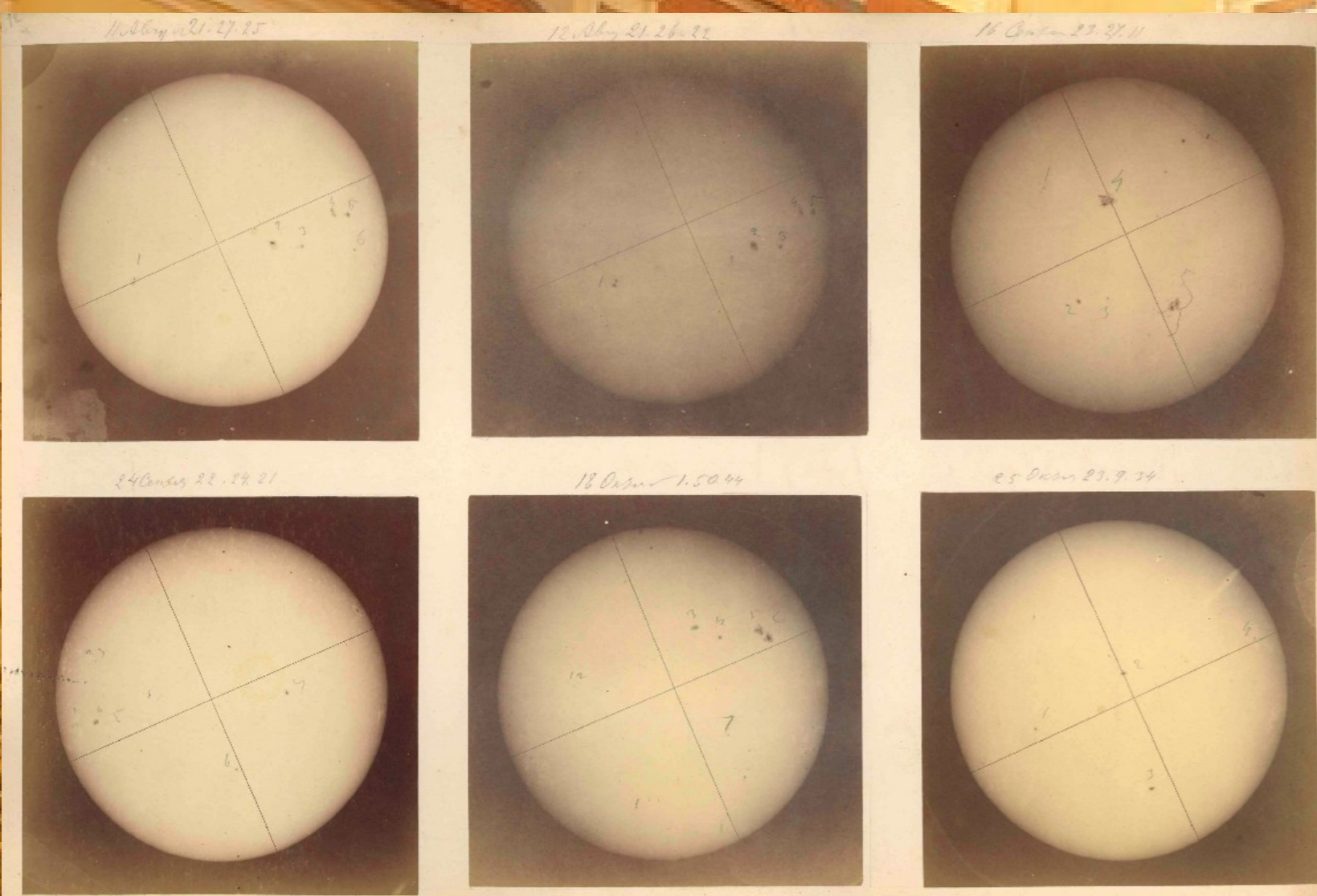
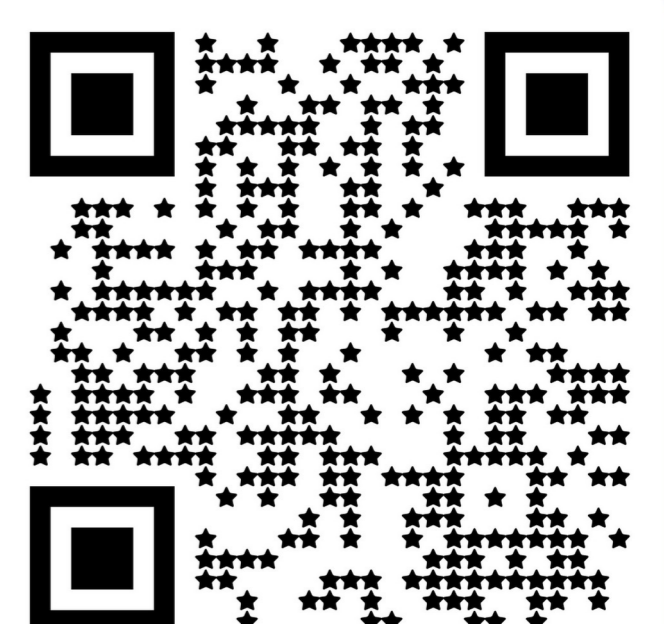


Figure 2: Solar images taken at the Vilnius Observatory in 1872

The full set of digitized historical solar images is available online:

<https://doi.org/10.57760/sciencedb.31949>

<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SBMURU>



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