



Figure 24.1: Above: Strasbourg Observatory, 1876–1880; Below: General view of the University of Strasbourg: around the new botanical garden, the ‘Great Dome’ of the Observatory, the greenhouses and the buildings of the institutes of botanics and physics. (Above: Ule, Otto: *Die Wunder der Sternwelt*. Berlin, Leipzig: Otto Spamer 1884, p. 411. Below: Glass plate photography of about 1880 – Strasbourg University Archives)

24. The Architectural and Instrumental Heritage of the Strasbourg University Observatory

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Abstract

When, in 1872, Alsace was handed over to Germany, Emperor Wilhelm I decided to make Strasbourg the showcase of his empire, and in particular to build a prestigious university and an observatory.

The construction of the observatory was entrusted to the astronomer August Winnecke (1835–1897), former director of the Pulkovo observatory, and to the *Baumeister* Hermann Eggert. Begun in 1876, the work was completed in 1880. The astronomical instruments, ordered from German makers, were installed during the winter of 1880–1881, and the observatory was inaugurated on September 22, 1881 at the general assembly of the *Astronomische Gesellschaft*, the international association of astronomers, whose secretary was Winnecke.

Marking the south-eastern extremity of the ‘imperial axis’, the architecture of the university observatory harmonizes perfectly with the new German city built on the former French parade grounds. The astronomical heritage operation conducted at the beginning of the present decade provides a richly documented and illustrated inventory of both the architecture and instruments of this institution. This work has also highlighted the unique quality of the collection of instruments, befitting the long and complex history of this institution.

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