

Microscopical Investigation: Impressions from Robert Hooke's Microscope

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This microscope was designed and used by Robert Hooke and made by Christopher Cock, London, circa 1665 and was used for the observations in his book "Micrographia," the first volume documenting observations made through a microscope. The microscope used three lenses that could magnify a specimen about 50 times. [M- 030.00276] (Released/Courtesy of NMHM)

In 1874, the Army Medical Museum (now known as the National Museum of Health and Medicine) collected its first microscopes under curator Lt. Col. George A. Otis. These early additions to the collection mark the beginning of the Billings Microscope Collection, which today

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Hooke's discovery from this microscope forced the realization of the existence of structures that were too small to be seen by the unaided eye. Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, one of the greatest early microbiologists—probably the first to observe microorganisms which he called animalcules and who discovered protozoa and bacteria—was directly inspired by Hooke's "Micrographia," according to Brian J. Ford, author of "The Leeuwenhoek Legacy." Ford claims that when Leeuwenhoek prepared his first package of specimens for the Royal Society in London, they were exactly the same sections of plant and animal material as those described by Hooke in his publication, and they were listed in the same order and in almost the same words.

Resources

Ford, Brian J., *The Leeuwenhoek Legacy*, Biopress, Bristol, 1991