

2.15 Session B2: Astronomie im Ostseeraum im 19. Jahrhundert und Antike Astronomie

2.16 *The observatory in Senftenberg (Bohemia),
built by John Parish (1774–1858)
after his exodus from Altona*

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Senftenberg (today Žamberk) is a small town in East-Bohemia. In 1815 John Parish (1774–1858), an English banker and shipowner from Altona (near Hamburg), purchased the estate Senftenberg from Verian Alfred Windisch-Grätz and moved, together with his wife Catherine, to the Senftenberg castle. As an amateur astronomer he continued to maintain contacts with Heinrich Christian Schumacher (1780–1850), the editor of the journal *Astronomische Nachrichten*. Using his recommendations, John Parish started to build an observatory in the garden near to the castle. This private observatory existed in 1844–1859 and was the largest and best equipped institution of this kind in Bohemia according to the report in *Astronomische Nachrichten*, written by Karl Kreil (1798–1862), the director of the state observatory in *Prague Clementinum College*.

Two outstanding personalities found employment in Senftenberg, first Paul Hackel, later abbot of the nearby Augustinian monastery, and then the Danish astronomer Theodor Brorsen (1819–1895) who studied and worked before in Als (South Jutland), Kiel, Hamburg and Altona. John Parish won several science awards – *Swedish Order of the Polar Star*, honorary membership of the *Royal Astronomical Society*, honorary doktorate of Prague University, honorary membership of the *Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences*, and was member of the *Economic Society of Austria and Styria*. After John Parish's death, his nephew and heir had the observatory dismantled, therefore its exact location remains unknown. The diaries of John Parish, preserved in the *State Regional Archives in Zámrsk*, offer an interesting view from outside on the community of natural scientists in Bohemia of mid 19th century.