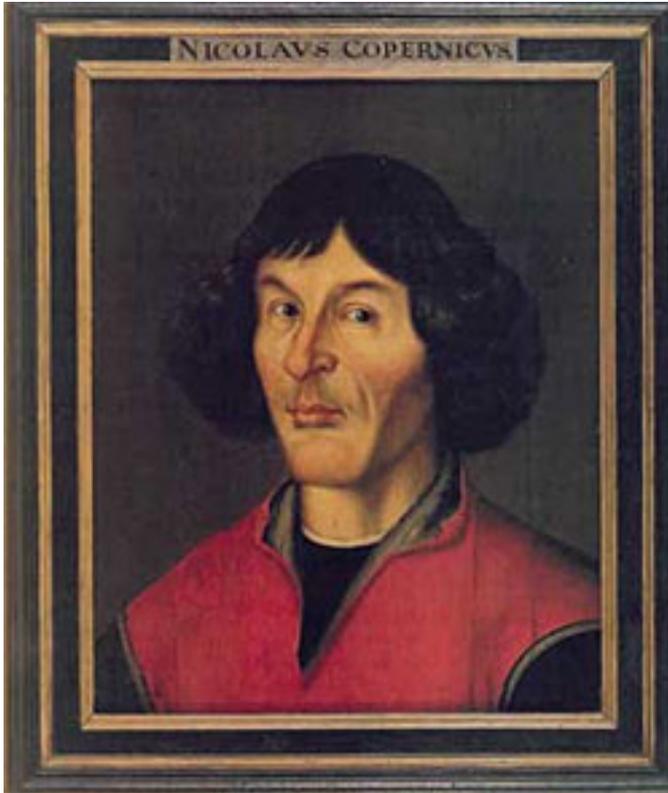


Nicolaus Copernicus

Nicolaus Copernicus, the most famous and the most outstanding citizen of Toruń. He was born here on February 19th, 1473 at St. Anne Street, today 17 Copernicus Street, which now houses a museum dedicated to the astronomer.



The fame of Copernicus is connected with his astronomical theory, the heliocentric theory, which assured Copernicus a place among the most outstanding scientists in history. In the town of his birth, Copernicus was baptized in a parish church, today's St. Johns Cathedral, spent his childhood there and a part of his youth.

The parents of the astronomer, Barbara and Nicolaus, had four children: Andrew, Nicolaus, Barbara and Catherine. Nicolaus spent his early childhood probably at a home at 36 Old-Town Market Square (the present Powszechny Dom Towarowy - General Department Store). After his father's death, the financial situation of the family worsened and a rich uncle, bishop Łukasz Watzenrode, took care of them. Nicolaus began his education at a municipal school at St. John's church (the corner of Łazienna and St. John's Street). The basic knowledge that he acquired there enabled him to continue his education. He started to study at a university department of liberal arts. In 1491, at the age of 18, under the influence of his uncle Watzenrode, Nicolaus began to study at the University of Cracow. At that time he left his home city, but he never forgot his origins.

During the four years spent at the university in Cracow, Nicolaus was exposed to many scientific disciplines and listened to lectures by many great scholars, among others, in Grammar, Rhetoric, Poetics, and also in Astronomy which had a considerable influence on his future. Thanks to these lectures he learned all the secrets of Astronomy. It is possible that it was during this time that in the mind of Nicolaus originated the idea of the theory of the construction of the world that was different from the one universally acknowledged at that time.

In autumn 1495, he went to Frombork in Warmia, where, helped by his uncle, he was to assume the position of the canon of the chapter at the local cathedral. However, already after 1496 he left for Italy and began studies at the university in Bologna. Except for taking legal courses, he himself carried out his first astronomical observations. Because he learned Greek, he could also use original

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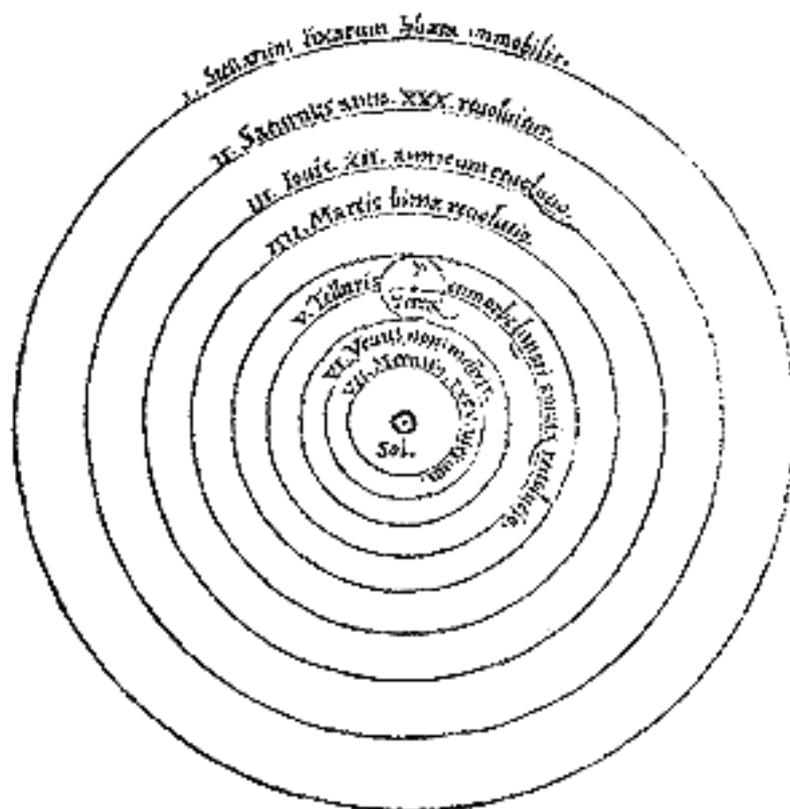
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texts of ancient scholars in the development of his passion. In 1500 he was in Rome, where he continued astronomical observations, and also practiced ecclesiastical law at the Papal Curia. In 1501, after his return to Frombork, Copernicus obtained the permission of the Warmia Chapter, to continue his medical studies in Padua. In Padua he perfected his Greek and continued to broaden his astronomical knowledge. In 1503 Copernicus obtained a PhD in Canon Law from Ferrara.

In autumn 1503 he came back to Lidzbark in the Warmia Land where for several years he lived at bishop Watzenrode's court. During that time he travelled with his uncle to conventions of the states of King's Prussia and to meetings with Polish kings. Already in Lidzbark, around 1507, Copernicus worked out the first heliocentric sketch of the construction of the universe (the so-called "Little Commentary"). It contained three theses about the triple movement of the Earth and it moved the Sun to the foreground in the universe.

After 1510 Copernicus left for Frombork, where he gave up the church and his political career, and devoted himself to astronomy. He carried out astronomical observations in the privacy of his house and on one of the towers of the Frombork fortress. However, after his uncle bishop Watzenrode's, death he did not have much time for scientific work because he held many responsible administrative functions then, for example, the chancellor of the chapter. As the Warmia canon, holding many positions in the administration of the bishopric, he also dealt with matters connected with the defences of Olsztyn. He also wrote economic dissertations and advised the Polish king on matters connected with monetary circulation.

In those days monetary relationships were complicated as there were 4 mints: in Toruń, Elbląg, Gdańsk and Königsberg. A frequent practice was the melting down of a good coin to a worse one, great benefits of which went not only to the mentioned cities but also to the Teutonic Knights Order. To counteract this, Nicolaus Copernicus wrote and read at a Prussian Parliament, which took place in the period from March 17th to 21st, 1522 in Grudziądz, a dissertation about the manner of coinage entitled "Modus cudendi monetam". However, he devoted most of his time to his great astronomical deed, for which he collected data from observations carried out in Olsztyn and Frombork and from the literature that he criticized. He supported and continuously enriched his heliocentric theory with many statements.



The first edition of the work "De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium" ("On the Revolutions of

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"De Revolutionibus in Coelestibus Sphaeris" was ready in 1530. Nonetheless, out of fear of the reaction of church authorities, Copernicus did not want to publish it. Only the arrival at Frombork of the young professor of Mathematics, Jerzy Joachim Retyk, who was an advocate of Copernicus's views, disposed the astronomer to publish the work. At last, it appeared in print in March 1543. It rationally presented the real existence of the world and was to cause a revolution in the opinions on the construction of the universe. However, at the end of 1542 Copernicus fell heavily ill (stroke and paralysis of the right side) and was unable to see his printed work.

On the 24th of May, 1543, Copernicus died in Frombork and was buried in the local cathedral. In 1853 a monument in honour of the great astronomer was erected in Toruń, and the street in which he was born was named after him. One of the best Polish universities bears the name of the great astronomer: The University of Nicolaus Copernicus in Toruń, and also the producer of the most famous Polish cookies, the Toruń gingerbread cookies: The Confectionary Factory "Kopernik" (Fabryka Cukiernicza "Kopernik").