



Johannes Kepler
Renowned astronomer
earned a meager living
casting horoscopes.

UCSC uncovers famed astronomer's manuscript

By **DAN WHITE**
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A long-forgotten 400-year-old horoscope by one of the Western world's most influential astronomers has been discovered at UC Santa Cruz.

The horoscope was written by Johannes Kepler, a 16th century astronomer ranked with the likes of Galileo and Copernicus.

"(The manuscript) is important not because of urgent scientific interest," said Anthony Misch, an astronomer at UCSC's Lick

Observatory, who discovered the horoscope. "It is important because it is in Kepler's hand, and he was one of the great astronomers. Let's just say it is priceless."

The German-born Kepler lived in Shakespeare's day. He is best known for his laws of planetary motion, including his de-

termination that planetary orbits are elliptical, not round. He influenced Sir Isaac Newton but died in poverty.

Misch found the document in late Decem-

ber in the Mary Lea Shane Archives of UC Santa Cruz's McHenry Library while researching solar eclipse expeditions. An announcement of the discovery was held back until the document could be authenticated.

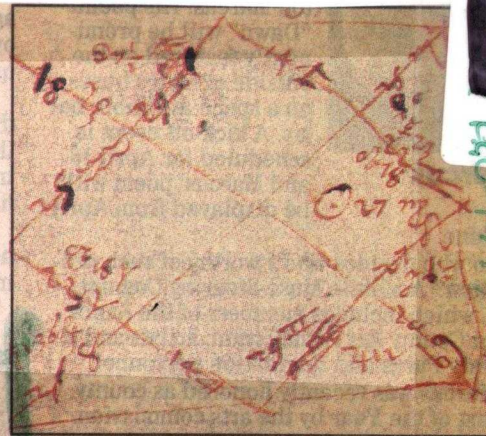
The discovery is an odd one, considering the University of California has owned the manuscript for generations.

"It was not misplaced," Misch said. "It was just forgotten."

Misch said the manuscript is "extremely

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Kepler

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valuable" but did not give a dollar figure.

The rare document contains geometric diagrams with zodiac symbols representing the planets, a sun and 12 constellations.

It is a vivid example of Kepler's secondary profession. Although he famously stated that astrology was "astronomy's foolish daughter," he once served as a court astrologer. According to one historical account, he scratched out a meager sum by writing the horoscopes. This one was prepared for an Austrian nobleman with the unlikely name of Hans Hannibal Hutter von Hutterhofen.

The Kepler artifact might have stayed in the dark forever. It was once stored at Pulkova Observatory outside St. Petersburg in Russia. The observatory founder, Wilhelm Struve, an eminent astronomer, apparently gave the manuscript away.

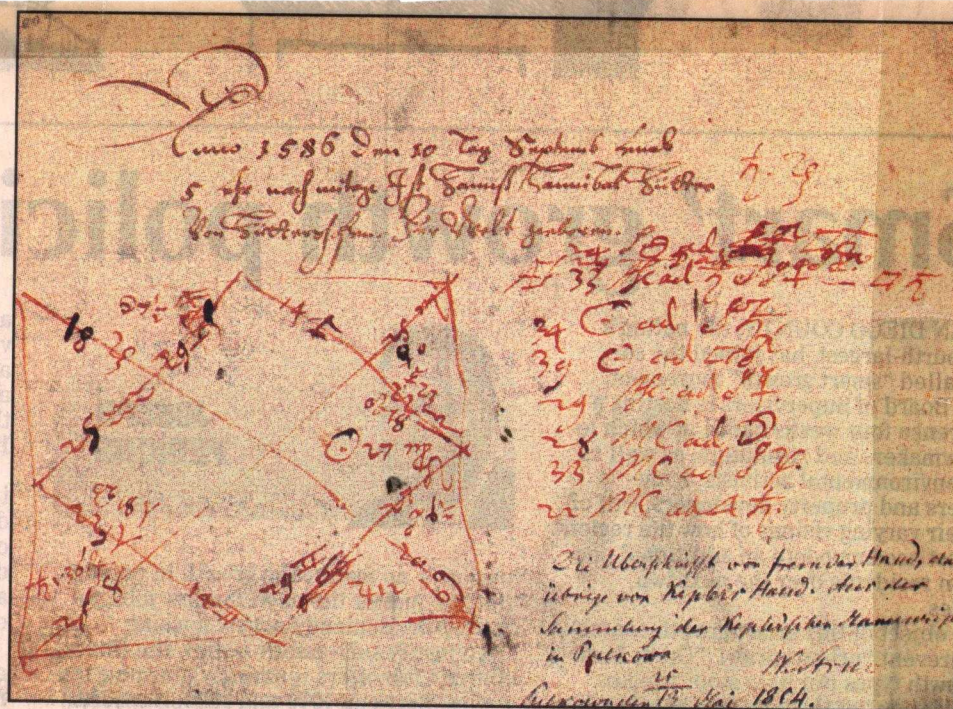
"I have been told by a historian that in fact, Struve handed these things out, as favors perhaps to visiting dignitaries," Misch said. "That is probably how it got out." Struve authenticated the piece and signed it in 1864.

Lick Observatory, on Mount Hamilton east of San Jose, acquired the manuscript in 1895 or 1896 at a sale in Germany, but at some point it was filed away and forgotten.

"It might have been hanging on someone's office wall or it might have gone unnoticed, who knows," Misch said.

It was moved to UCSC in the mid-'60s with a number of other items, Misch said, though he added that it wasn't mentioned in the McHenry file archives.

After Misch spotted the manuscript, his fluency in German and experience as a book collector served him well. He said his hands trembled when he realized



This horoscope was prepared by Kepler for an Austrian nobleman named Hans Hanibal Hutter von Hutterhofen.

what it was.

To verify his finding, Misch sent a copy to Klaus Mecklenburg, who works at a Berlin-based firm that specializes in autographed manuscripts. Mecklenburg pronounced it real.

The manuscript gives UCSC a link to the man who is most famous for founding celestial mechanics and was a pioneer in studies of telescopic optics.

At the time Kepler prepared the horoscope, he probably was working for Rudolph II, a Hapsburg emperor, Misch said. He was expected to do horoscopes despite his title as Imperial Mathematician.

"Kepler needed the money he earned from astrology because his various jobs suffered such handicaps as low pay, no

pay (and) tyrannical bosses," wrote astronomer Donald Goldsmith in his book, "The Astronomers."

Misch said Kepler did not buy into the idea that a star's position could foretell the future.

"But he did have ideas about the disposition and position of stars at the time of birth having some general influence on the course of a lifetime."

Kepler, for obvious reasons, is remembered more for his scientific thought than astrology.

"Had he just been an original astrologer and not discovered the laws of planetary motion, of course no one would remember him," Misch said.

The horoscope is now being stored in UCSC's special collections.