

Info on Star Plates and fly spankers.

Courtesy Sara Schechner, PhD. Harvard's History of Science dept.

The star plates are mounted on the frame that you can see on the desks of some of the women. The bottom, flat part of the frame held mirror, which reflected light up through the star plate. Plates were 8" x 10" and larger.

They needed good light, so would sit near windows. They put the plates in the frames with the glass up, emulsion down and wrote on them with india ink.

The photos show them holding magnifying glasses, actually, but they would've held the spanker near or on the plate itself.

There are some photos of the spankers in her article, "The Scientific and Historical Value of Annotations on Astronomical Photographic Plates," which I also posted to Drive. Scroll to page 12 and you will see them. The spankers' markings are shown on the photos. The spanker pictured is 4 centimeters wide.

There are also photos of the kinds of markings that the women made on the plates and the log entries they made.

There are two urls – the one with "dasch" in the url has photos of the plates and of the spanker; the url with "women-computers" in it has photos of the women, some of which we already have.

<http://dasch.rc.fas.harvard.edu/gallery.php>

the dark plates are positives (so printed as normal photographs),
the light gray ones with dark dots are the typical negatives that are used.

The fly spanker shown is a very large one. We have in our museum several tiny ones.

See also: <http://platestacks.cfa.harvard.edu/women-computers>