Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Encyclopedia Article

Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel

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Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel

1784-1846

German astronomer and mathematician whose work in astronomy, celestial mechanics, and mathematics led him at age 26 to the Königsberg Observatory directorship, a position he held all his life. He is best remembered for a mathematical function that carries his name, one that he developed to solve Kepler's problem of a three-body system under mutual gravitation. Together with Jacobi and Franz Neumann, Bessel is usually associated with teaching reform in German universities.