Giuseppe Piazzi Encyclopedia Article

Giuseppe Piazzi

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Giuseppe Piazzi

1746-1826

Italian astronomer remembered for discovering the first asteroid, Ceres. Piazzi was founder and first director of the Palermo Observatory (1790). On January 1, 1801, while taking observations for his star catalog, he noticed a star-like object not on Nicolas de Lacaille's star list. Piazzi named the object Ceres and tracked its motions, which resembled those of a planet or comet. Carl Friedrich Gauss later showed that Ceres moved in the gap between Mars and Jupiter.