John Canton Encyclopedia Article

John Canton

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John Canton

1718-1772

English schoolmaster best known for his electro-static induction experiments and discovery that glass does not always charge positively by friction. Canton also developed a method for producing artificial magnets (1749) and correctly identified the cause of seawater luminosity. His observations led him to associate irregularities in compass needle diurnal orientations with unusual aurora borealis activity, today known as magnetic storms. He was awarded the Royal Society's 1765 Copley Medal for demonstrating that water is slightly compressible.