Joseph De Beauchamp Encyclopedia Article

Joseph De Beauchamp

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Contents

Joseph De Beauchamp Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Joseph De Beauchamp.....3

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1752-1801

French astronomer who conducted the first known excavation of a Middle Eastern site. At the instigation of his uncle Miroudat, the Bishop of Babylonia, he was appointed Vicar-General in Baghdad (1781). While exercising the functions of this office, Beauchamp examined numerous Mesopotamian ruins and initiated digs in Babylon (1786). His excavations showed the ease with which cuneiform tablets could be recovered. Reports of his discoveries created a sensation in France and England.