Pieter Van Musschenbroek Encyclopedia Article

Pieter Van Musschenbroek

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Contents

Pieter Van Musschenbroek Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Pieter Van Musschenbroek.....3

Pieter Van Musschenbroek

1692-1761

Dutch physicist who invented the Leyden jar, a device used for storing electric charges. Musschenbroek was a professor of mathematics and physics at the University of Leyden in Holland. Early in the eighteenth century, scientists were able to create electricity with friction, but not to store it. Musschenbroek was conducting an experiment in which he poured water into a glass jar and connected the jar by wire to a friction machine that produced static electricity. He discovered upon touching the wire that it created a shock, caused by electricity stored within the jar. The device, which was later named the Leyden jar, is said to be the prototype of capacitors, or electric conductors, which are used in radios, television sets and other electrical equipment.