

Astronomer and Discoverer of 8 Comets

# Karoline Herschel

[ 16 March 1750 - 9 January 1848 ]



## Special Scientific Achievements

Karoline Herschel was the first woman to discover a comet.

Karoline Herschel received many honors for her scientific achievements as astronomer.

Writing of a supplementary catalogue to Flamsteed's Atlas of stars.

She received a gold medal from the Astronomical Society of London and was an honorary member.

**1750** Karoline Herschel is born in Hanover.

**1750 - 1767** In addition to playing the violin, Karoline learns to read and write.

**1772 - 1780** Karoline Herschel moves to England, to live with her brother, the astronomer Wilhelm Herschel. There she learns English, occupies herself with book-keeping and cultivates her musical qualification. She discusses astronomical problems with her brother, addresses herself to the theoretical basics of astronomy and assists her brother with building telescopes and other astronomical tasks: Copying of catalogues, as well as grinding and polishing mirrors.

**1781** Wilhelm discovers the planet Uranus, becomes known in scientific circles and is elected Fellow of the Royal Society. King George III offers him the position of court astronomer.

**1783** Karoline Herschel observes the night skies systematically and finds 14 new nebulae.

**1785** She receives her own little observatory, where she works independently in Wilhelm's absence.

**1786** On August 1, Karoline Herschel is the first woman to discover a comet. For this discovery she receives honours from the Royal Society. As Wilhelm's assistant she receives a small annual salary of 50 pounds (her brother receives 200 pounds).

**1789 - 1797** Karoline Herschel discovers 7 other comets and a multitude of double stars. She is well known in Europe as an outstanding astronomer. Furthermore she works on her catalogue of nebulae based on earlier observations.

**1822** After Wilhelm's death Karoline returns to Hanover. She is financially independent as she receives a small pension and an inheritance from her brother.

**1825** Karoline presents the Flamsteed's Atlas with the supplementary catalogue that she has compiled to the Royal Academy of Göttingen. In addition she publishes books written by her brother.

**1828** She completes a catalogue of the nebulae and stars observed by her brother and herself, for which she receives a gold medal from the Astronomical Society of London, of which she is elected an honorary member.

**1835** At the age of 85, Karoline Herschel is nominated Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society as a leading scientist of the 19th century.

**1840** On her 90th birthday, the King of Prussia sends her the gold medal awarded for the "furtherance of science".

**1848** Karoline Herschel dies at the age of 98.

*Note:*

*In her honour a crater of the moon bears the name of Karoline Herschel.*